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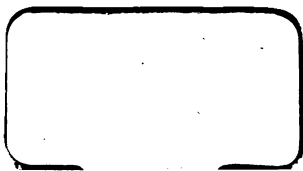
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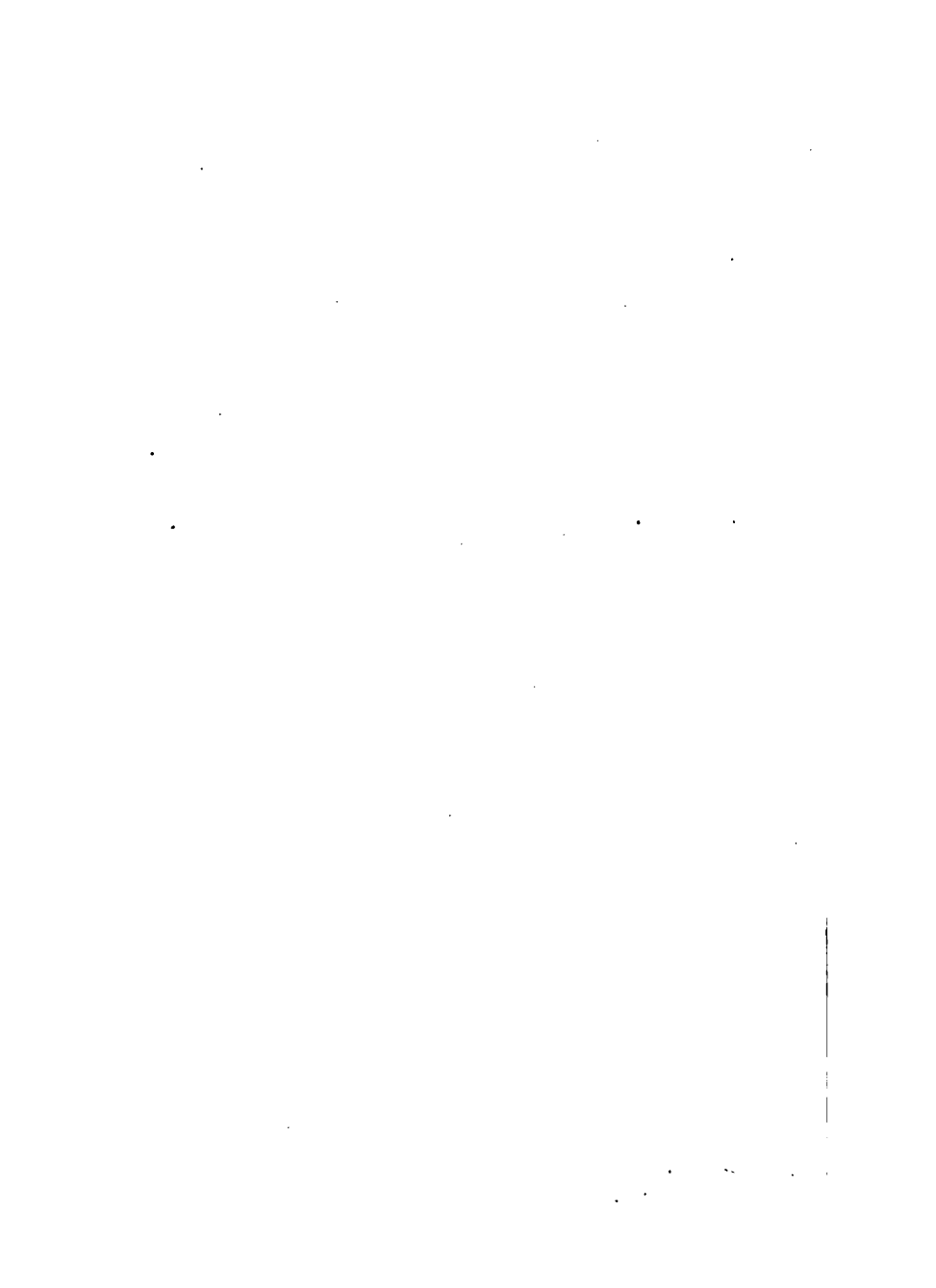
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Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
For pleasure ; but thro' all this tract of years
Wearing the white flour of a blameless life,
Before a thousand lying littlenesses,
To whitewash every blot. For where are they
Who dare foreshadow for their only sons
Yet lovelier lives, and more unstain'd, than
THEIRS ?

Or how should England, dreaming of her sons,
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such well-earn'd rewards and ease as YOURS,
YE noble FATHERS of our kings to be—
Laborious for the people and the poor.

INVOCATION.

'GENTLE READER'—throw away this tract.
'Tis for the times, 'tis true, but not for you
—too weak to wield a pick with me, to prick our
peaceful Arcadée.

Ye who have none other god but gain; it's
against your faith to go with me, for it will cost
you ninepence and an hour or two, and 'time'—
you tell me in your creed—'is money.'

Women and Men with brains; Braves who
would sooner bruise a serpent's head than flee from
it, and Brutes after my kind—I call YOU to come
with me and follow to their lairs in the wilds of
'Merrie England' those birds and beasts of prey,
and creeping things, and creatures fabulous, which
you have only seen aforetime 'cabin'd, cribb'd,
confin'd, bound in'—in town menageries or in
'Stories for the young.'

The pink, prize-winning porker, swept and
garnished twice a day and honour-ribbon'd round
his neck at Smithfield show, looks not and lives
not as he did in his comfortable country quarters,
where he wallowed at his own sweet will—a pam-
pered and polluted spoiler.

The gorgeous jay, amidst a flight of jays, is
tame indeed, and harmless to his kin; but let the
brilliant bird alight amongst the common crowd
of nesting sparrows, toiling ants, and lowly worms
of his own wood, and he becomes a greedy tyrant.

Ye cannot learn what the landed-lord is like
by viewing him—loafing and lithping amongst

his pals and pallettes in a West-end palace ; nor is the unselfish squire in novels 'nothing but the truth.'

To know these noble animals aright, you must, unseen, see them in their haunts and habits as they live unfettered in their native fastnesses.

I call you. Come with me, and we shall discover by the way besides the bleaching, broken bones of the defenceless prey, and many missing links, and curious fossils, and some survivals of the unfittest that should have been forgotten fossils long, long ago.

FOXES.

IN common with the rest of my heroic countrymen, who have with sundry false notes sung and sworn for generations past that they 'never, *never*, NEVER will be slaves,' I have taken as commandments the tables of Court precedence, so we must of course run after the noblest rustic first.

Considering that our country has a history of a thousand years, and customs and laws which alter not, it is curious that there still should be a shadow of a doubt as to who is greatest in the counties of this kingdom. Some say a Duke ; others say them—nay, a neighing Thoroughbred is best ; some ruddy rustics call a Shorthorn cow 'The Duchess'—their 'she-leader,' whilst pale-faced dissenters from that Eastern faith dare swear by Bishops as above the cloven-footed ancestress of bulls. Of the noble army of village martyrs, many from their lowly hovels cry aloud that they

to 'Ladies Bountiful' bow down; a few noisy 'men of blood and fire' place farm-fed pheasants first; but most of the 'thirty million fools' fall down and worship the golden Fox, as quite *The* Chief of the county aristocracy.

For my part, I often wonder why the free and foul fox was not chosen for our country's crest, rather than the false-tooth'd and mangy lion, captive in an iron-clad cage, which costs the curious a shilling and a crush to see and sniff. The double-dealing fox, who lays up for himself much treasure which he will never use; who for ever pokes his pointed nose into his neighbour's nest to see how much he can annex, and then sneaks off with his illgotten gains; who fears to fight a stronger neighbour who might thrash him—is an allegory surely more adaptable to England's glory than is the similitude of a lion reckless and improvident.

Whenever I can drink of that pure 'well of English undefyled' which saturates the pages of that modest register of charnel-houses and their bones—'The Peerage'—I break out into a purple rash of national pride, like a proper plantagenet should, as I read of 'Arg' and 'Gu,' of 'Az' and 'Ppr' and other daring deeds of my dead and disreputable ancestors; so, pardon my little weakness in proposing a new national crest: 'For England, a Fox courant, puant, or; gorged with a goose, gu; issuant from the dexter jaws a hen, saignante, reflexed over the back; his sinister hinder paw collared of a steel springe ppr.'

The wild fox, like most blue-blooded aristocrats, is born of more or less 'poor but honest parents,' mostly in a nest kindly built for him

by his 'bitter enemy the hunter.' For some time before his birth, his mother, who was always rather fast, has been living the life of a gadding grasswidow, having separated from her last husband; which amiable weakness proves that she could never have appeared at Court, for presentation there, as you already know, prevents a breach of marriage vows.

The infant fox is called a 'cub,' possibly because he possesses some of the characteristics of the young of the county capitalist as displayed at Eton, Harrow, and the other hotbeds for the training and maturing of the ordinary human cub. He is crafty, cruel, lazy, devoting his few energies to play, wasteful, fastidious in his food, not too truthful, drawling in his speech, impudent to inferior, but 'sucking up' to superior, animals, and sometimes almost a chartered nuisance. But the quadruped cub has one advantage over his biped brother, he is the canniest little cuss—to look at—in existence.

Considering that the fox is essential to the glory of the kingdom, it is curious that he costs so little to keep. Most of our national domestic animals—pet poodles, ornamental pugs, and stately furniture, rods and sticks in waiting and the rest—cost about a thousand annually apiece, whereas the modest fox never eats and wastes an ounce more food a year than feeds a labourer's family on his neighbour's farm.

Brought up in the wild state, the fox is fed by his future hunter on tender rabbits and titbits from the kennel larder. When, however, the cub is supported by his mother and her temporary husband, he gets rations greater even than his

greedy appetite requires. His fond parents forage around by night, and contrive to bring home, or at least to kill and leave somewhere on the way, three or four fowls, two or three brace of rabbits, a hare, and a sitting pheasant hen or two. Of this nightly fare, the fox family eat about a fourth, and then they carefully cover up the rest in an earthen pantry for next day, and then next day they straightway all forget where that pantry is, and so they prowl around for more.

When the ferocious fox's hour for being hunted has at last arrived as advertised, he proudly snuffs the dewy morn and the free air of his native woodlands from the inside of a stout flour-bag, borne upon a stolid keeper's back. The 'meet' is at eleven and he must be there punctually, for the spinny next the squire's laundry will be drawn the first, and he must thence run wild and free as from his native haunts, or his breeder and the 'M.F.H.' will vie with one another as to which can swear the coarsest. So the velvet 'earth-stopper' jolts rapidly along, regardless of the scratching, snarling, beast of prey biting at his back.

A cat, we all know, has nine lives, but a single, able-bodied man can ultimately kill at least one cat, if he keeps on killing long enough. When I was a schoolboy, I took the first lives of most of my neighbours' cats, generously leaving the owners the remaining eight; so, I can affirm from practical experience, that it is possible, even for a timid little boy, to kill the ninth of a full-grown cat.

But a fox is a very costly creature to destroy. In England it takes a combined cavalry and

barking artillery brigade, numbering, on an average, fifty horses, fifty men and forty dogs to chase and slay one fox. The price of this plucky capture of a national outlaw is a hundred and thirty-two pounds and thirteen shillings per adult fox. Foxes are not a bit more proud than they have a right to be.

A proof of the extreme importance of the hunting department in the efficient ruling of the immense dominions of the queen, is the fact that the Master of Her Majesty's Hounds, whose duty it is to represent the interests of at least eighty 'yaller dogs,' is always a very exalted statesman high up in the councils of the sovereign; whilst Agriculture, which occupies more of her majesty's three hundred million subjects than all other occupations put together, is too vulgar or too trivial a pursuit to possess a cabinet councillor in the ministry which advises our mighty empress.

The old-time English princes fought hand to hand with England's enemies in bloody battles abroad. That, we all know now, was a wicked, cruel proceeding, sometimes solely for the sake of gaining glory. How grateful ought we to be that our present princes do not thus imperil lives so precious, but that they pursue instead those enemies in our midst, who plunder and lay waste the gooseries of our land.

To my mind, that prince, who voluntarily leaves the well-earned ease and comfort of the splendid Court to set out on a dangerous expedition; who after tedious marchings and counter-marchings cries havock and lets slip the dogs of war against the mighty enemy, whether in the open plain, the ghostly forest, or the treacherous

marsh, thus making the life of the lowly hen worth living—is a prince indeed. His deed is the more meritorious because he does not gain by it that blaze of glory and those pretty stars and ribbons, which he might have easily secured by more bloody feats of arms abroad.

I have assisted at a royal duke's obsequies, and I have found that there is more genuine emotion at a fox's death and funeral than at the planting of an amiable prince 'deeply regretted and beloved by all who knew him'—not. Am I not, therefore, justified in thinking with Machiavelli that Foxiness is next to Kingliness?

I once beheld this royal retinue following with intense excitement in the perfumed wake of an invisible and feeble fox: the heir apparent to the 'greatest empire that the world has ever seen'; the empress of the largest European State but one; three of the queen's 'most high, potent and noble princes'; one field-marshal; two most noble knights of the garter; nine of our wisest hereditary lawgivers, all lords of notoriety; eight county members of the house of commons; fourteen ladies of lords and knights; forty-four hounds; fifty-six followers on foot; three hundred and seventy-two horsemen and women 'of sorts'; three hundred and eighty-nine horses; two donkeys; seven clergymen of the established church; two terriers; three babies; two perambulators; two nurses and one sheep-dog. Two thousand seven hundred and nineteen feet following the tracks of four smaller feet, or six hundred and eighty-one thousand pounds of flesh after the balmy taint of fifteen pounds and a half of 'meat unfit for human food.' Why even Marie Antoi-

nette in all her glory had no grander suite than this, to carry her book of uncommon prayer to vespers at Versailles.

Seeing then that so many eminent persons are self-sacrificing enough to risk life and limb in following afar off the steps of a vicious 'varmint,' we are sure that those, who say that 'foxhunting is the silliest use to which a man can be put,' must be merely jealous misanthropes—too poor and mean to hunt themselves.

Those spiteful hypercritics are also very unkind and wickedly wrong, who say that 'cruelty-to-dumb-animal societies' strain at gnats and swallow camels, because they imprison a 'coster' for kicking his donkey, which can kick him back again at least as hard, whilst they never prosecute foxhunters for 'torturing' foxes. I can assure you, by the evidence of many well-known and noble hunters, that 'Foxes enjoy the sport themselves.'

It would be as uncalled-for and absurd to punish a man for chasing a vixen with hungry hounds, as it would have been for neighbouring planters to have expostulated with a Southern slaveowner for merely tracking down and tearing a runaway slave-mother with bloodhounds. Moreover, as you say: 'An M.F.H. is a gentleman, and therefore couldn't do an ungentlemanly thing, which cruelty would be, whereas a coster is an uncultured outcast, who admits his guilt by not employing counsel to defend his hopeless case.'

When effeminate people fancy that a vixen is troubled in her mind, simply because she labours along for an hour as fast as she can lay legs to the

ground, whilst her nose and hanging tongue drip frothy blood, and her eyes start from their sockets, as she hears the yelling fiends behind her drawing nearer and nearer until they can tear her limb from limb alive—I say that those old women are fools; ‘that’s only the fox’s fun, you know.’

The days of fox-hunting in England are drawing to a close. This land distress, which is so troublesome to landlords, will, I am much afraid, drive the first nail into the foxhound’s coffin. Before the hound is labelled in museums as extinct, however, hunters may have to pay a heavy rent for the privilege of riding over working farmers’ land. ‘Why should you wish to be such ungrateful highwaymen as to compel those kind gentlemen, who rid you of your farm-yard enemies, to ‘stand and deliver’?’ I softly asked the burly farmer of a hundred sodden acres, as I saw him leaning on a newly-broken gate, and cussing the sunken tracks of a hundred horses scattered across a field of wheat. With a scowl which forbade my explaining his error to him, he growled out: ‘’Cause I don’t zee why one man’s spourt should take away t’other man’s bread.’

THE LORD-LIEUTENANT.

NEXT in precedence after the fox, but a very long way after in importance, comes the county lord-lieutenant. A sure proof of his very secondary celebrity is the fact that every Briton knows a fox on sight, but not one man in ten thousand would know a lord-lieutenant in his

ordinary husk after he has moulted his fine feathers. Indeed, even when his lordship is rigged out in his livery, it would be better if he were labelled, or branded on the back like his prototype the gentle sheep, for some people who gaze upon him in all his glory are yet so stupid as not to be awe-struck by his dignity, but fancy that he is merely an uncommon kind of town-crier, or a flat infusion of petty borough mayor and gin.

A lord-lieutenant is neither born so, nor does our puissant queen create him, as she creates a sixteen stone baron out of nothing, nor is he laid like the queen bee lays the ordinary drone; she simply grants a ticket of leave to a more or less learned lord already existing—provided he has never done anything—permitting him during her good pleasure to go on doing still more of nothing. (St. Athanasius did *not* write that genesis for me.)

The Queen generally calls a lord-lieutenant a ‘Custos Rotulorum’ at the same time, which, being interpreted, is said to be a term of mild contempt to counteract the ecstasy which would otherwise overcome a man honoured with the former dignity.

Some of these county kings won’t admit that they are also Rotulorums. For instance, I once asked a sporting and not too learned lord-lieutenant, what a rotulorum was. He stammered out that he had never seen one; then, recollecting his reputation as a great shot and game preserver, he hastened to add: “I must have seen one too in the rodents’ cage at the Zoo, and now I come to consider, I recollect my keeper once showed me a dead ’un nailed up amongst the other vermin on

his kennel-door, but 'pon my word I shouldn't know 'im agen.' I ventured to remark that they were very rare, at which he prophesied that they would soon become extinct—a prophecy which is more likely to be fulfilled than some others of his.

The lieutenancy ticket of leave is not necessarily given to the highest peer in the county. That noble man which Her Most Sagacious Majesty supposes to be the most respectable, or failing such, the apparently least disreputable, in that department of the dame-school, is the one usually fixed upon to receive this 'certificate of good conduct.'

Lord-lieutenants are, as a rule, singularly quiet creatures, and are easily domesticated, especially if well fed. Some naturalists assert that their marked quietness in harness is due to their being, like American 'bus mules, so overworked. Possibly this is the cause, but until some one can induce one of these industrious public servants to throw off his excessive modesty and give us some details of his duties, it is very difficult to say whether they really do suffer from overpressure.

When I was once engaged in writing the second book of the Chronicles for twelve months of a lord-lieutenant, who had then been in office for two-and-twenty years, I could never induce him to tell me, himself, of more than two tittles of his herculean labours, which tittles were the sending periodically to the lord chancellor of a misspelt catalogue of stolid squires to be stamped as magistrates, and the piloting of a prince twice in twenty years through two great county pageants.

I should add, for the information of some of my readers who do not happen to be royal dukes

or Rotulorums, that when an exceptionally serene he highness swoops down in state on an excited shire, the lord-lieutenant is 'by appointment' the showman who has surreptitiously to whisper into the royalty's near ear the names of all the magnates in the provincial menagerie. The tactful prince then utters a guttural greeting, bows a more or less stomach-aching bow, shakes an obsequious paw, or smiles a guelphic smile, as he 'remembers' each plump patrician puppet as 'an old friend.'

Then those magnates magnify themselves yet more as they simper at each other, saying: 'What a pleasant prince it is, to be sure; like his noble forefathers, he never forgets faces. Let us pray: Long live the Prince! Hooray!'

SOME DUKES.

IN London, the average private duke appears to be oppressed with a perpetual fear lest somebody should take him for a duke. He gives you the impression that he is an impostor playing at being a quiet-living 'past grand' 'purveyor of tripe by special appointment to the queen,' who has retired on a comfortable competence. If you look at him, he averts his noble eye and seems afraid of being found out. His appearance is 'eminently respectable'; I may say reassuring, sometimes almost homely. He wears thoroughbred English whiskers like a broken fringe around his intellectual face. Watch him for a moment as he walks by you in the street, and he will quicken his

usually unobtrusive steps, for he is afraid you are going to beg of him, or, worse still, that you may call out to the bystanders that there's a real live Dook.

Should he ever speak to you, it will be in a modest, measured tone, coupled with a quiet confidence, as if he wished you to recollect that he had got on his Garter and a gout plaster under his waistcoat. His clothes are unassuming and do not fit too well; but then a duke can wear 'thirteen shilling trousers' with impunity, which a penniless colonel with an ambitious wife in 'South Belgravia' dare not be seen in. Except perhaps a plain and very costly watch, which is always wrong and which nobody ever sees, the remainder of the 'jewellery' which he wears wouldn't pawn for as much as that sported by His Grace's poorest scullery maid on her Sunday out at 'Grinnidge' with full private Bluechops.

But when rustivating in his own county, a duke is a very different man. 'There they change all that.'

Everywhere within twenty miles at least of his own park a duke becomes *The Duke*. It is never necessary—nay, it proves your ignorance or impudence—to say: 'The Duke of Suettschire'; he is never called anything else but 'The Jook' or 'Is Grease' or personally 'Yer Grease'; his son naturally rejoicing in the courtesy title of 'Lard.' When a tenant speaks to you of the young Lord Henry Dripping, the duke's son, he says 'Lard 'Enry did' so and so; and when he replies to Grosventrina, the nineteen-stone duchess dowager, who patronises him at the tenants' ball, he still styles her 'Your Grease.'

The Duke becomes a profoundly interesting idol to all the rustics in the region round about him. He may be invisible and inscrutable; partially eclipsed and patronising, or visible and vulgar.

The 'visible and vulgar' duke is, of course, much the most popular. He races, hunts, and swears; He breeds and shoots hundreds of tame pheasants at half a guinea a head; He is a mighty farmer and cattle dealer and dog fancier; He keeps many male means for improving the breed of local horses; He has twenty-six superfine flunkys in his house, weighing two tons, ten hundred-weights; He believes in the divine right of princes and especially of dukes; He is a clumsy tory wirepuller, and commands the county magistrates and yeomanry; He has a dismal town house at the West End and a bright little bower in the North West corner with a temporary tottie in it, and he has a yacht rotting at Cowes. He has a duchess that he deserts, two daughters dead or married and forgotten, three sons that he endures, and a chaplain (who is also his bookmaker) officiating mostly in a pink cope and buckskin breeches. He can lithp or speak—but cannot spell—his mother tongue; He, or his Jew money-lender, has a rent-roll of a hundred thousand a year and the spiritual control of twenty-two parishes. He has no God; He has Gout; and he will some day have a coffin.

The Duke of Gilgal is not, as some people suppose, a very selfish man. I, although merely a human being, know him well, and I can assure you that he is sometimes extremely charitable, but, like all really good men, he takes great pains

to do his good deeds in secret. For instance, a few years ago, he lit upon a poorly-fed, consumptive-looking, little damsel with large, dark, lustrous eyes, seeming larger by reason of her wan cheeks with the fatal hectic spots very decidedly marked thereon. Although it was the depth of winter, and snow was on the ground, she had on very little above her tiny, weazen waist and still less below it; indeed her scanty clothes pierced through and through with large holes could not have weighed three pounds! Think of that and shudder, ye that go about in sealskin! Well His Grace of Gilgal was much moved when he saw this fragile child wandering about and singing so as to earn a miserable pittance, evidently not enough to buy sufficient covering as well as bread for her pinched body.

We have all seen those poor, pitiable, little starvelings, trudging painfully along, barefooted and bareheaded, singing through the muddy streets of London for stray coppers and occasional cabdrivers' curses. So the Duke's warm, charitable heart yearned towards the little foundling, and he was puzzled for some minutes as to how he could best show his pity for her helplessness. He could not chuck a shilling to her; it would be 'bad form,' for he was in the sixth row of the stalls, and little Kathleen Beaumont was not intoning 'Ome sweet 'Ome' in the snowy, slushy street, but warbling as a curious kind of Cupid behind the footlights at the 'Anatomy theatre of Varieties.'

Resolved to befriend the friendless Katie, the Duke visited the 'Anatomy' on the morrow, and the tripping Cupid was annoyed at finding that a

pair of powerful opera-glasses, surmounted by a hairless head working on a dress-clad pivot in the centre of the second row of stalls, were turned steadfastly on every *pas* she took. She was, however, somewhat appeased a few minutes later, when 'the sole lessee and manager' introduced her in a little bower near the greenroom to the baldheaded benefactor indeed of all ballet-girls in need—the Duke of Gilgal.

For quite two years afterwards, that truly noble man, not only fed, partially—sometimes only very partially—clothed, and housed his little *protégée*, but he placed also at her sole disposal a brand-new brougham (large enough to hold a large man as well as a little girl) and a pair of beautiful bays. She had also a magnificent diamond necklace to dance in at the theatre, and snug, warm sables to drive home in afterwards.

Now all this disinterested charity was done without an atom of pharisaical ostentation. The duke modestly kept his extreme benevolence to himself; he did not even tell the duchess, although she was always deeply interested in her husband's private philanthropy to the friendless and fallen. That is what I call *really noble* charity; what say you?

I must add, for I am sure you have taken a deep interest in the gentle Katie, that the Duke dropped her like a hot potato when her drunken mother told him one day—not in a lucid interval—that his darling little cupidess was the eldest daughter of his eldest son, the Marquess of Bath-sheba.

In gratitude to the House of Lords, to whom she owes so much, Miss Kathleen Beaumont has now consented to be governess to the lovely little

Earl of Grownrent, who came of age last year after a long minority. Her official designation might be 'Comptroller of his lordship's privy purse.'

Some Dukes, whose ancestors were mighty men of war, have inherited fourfold the fighting characteristics of their forefathers. The November reign of 'our sufferin' lady queen Victoria' had finally covered the court with a blue umbrella, when a nobleman, whom I will call the Duke of Leicestersquare, because that wasn't his name, was the daring hero in a duel, which reminds one more of the reckless single combats, which, we read, took place in the middle ages between two champions hating one another to the death. The rash exploit was in this wise.

'Is Grease was leisurely riding down a village street, accompanied by hounds and lords and ladies and the motley crew who justify their lives by hunting foxes, when an ancient and asthmatic terrier had the intolerable impudence to scoff at the sorry pageant from the safe side of a closely railed-in garden. Of course, no man with any pretensions to honour could brook so gross an insult, certainly not a duke, who is the incarnation of honour: so, dismounting in hot haste and leaving his horse to the care of two friendly magistrates in pink, His Grace advanced *alone* to storm the stockaded garden. Generously declining, with the necessary oath, the assistance of three or four other magistrates and law-givers who bravely offered to accompany him on his forlorn hope, the Lord of Leicestersquare and of the *habitués* thereof, a giant in stature and strength, fearlessly and furiously strode forward. Kicking down the crazy gate with his two noble feet at once (which

feat, nimble reader, if you try, you will find exceedingly graceless, difficult, and dangerous), and scorning to fear the toothless terrier, whose paralysed haunches forbade her flight, His valiant Grace jumped upon the helpless animal, and smote its writhing stomach with all his might and a loaded whiphandle, until a tiny, withered-up, old maid threw herself between the victorious knight and his mutilated enemy.

Knowing that the great ladies in the road were watching him, His Grace forbore to strike the fainting little woman crouching at his feet; he contented himself with merely threatening and cursing her and the only plaything she had in the world.

As he turned to remount, and rejoin his admiring gang in the street, a low moan of bitter anguish escaped from a very old man, who had tottered to his porch in the garden, where he stood leaning on two sticks, his long, thin, grey hair quivering in the breeze. The aged Yeoman lived on his little freehold, whereon he had seen his cowardly neighbour trespass, curse his daughter, and brutally beat his dog.

The Duke and the Hunt rode on, and soon forgot the little play. The old man slowly staggered back to his chimney-corner. His forefathers had been ruined for fighting for Cromwell, and his rude Puritan pride shook his broken-down old body till it twitched convulsively for the vengeance which he knew he could never get. He and his only child left to him were much too weak in body to avenge themselves, and he knew too well that, being only a poor commoner, appealing to his country's laws would not punish the Great

man who had wronged him, for his case would come before those very magistrates that had trespassed against him.

So, for many days, he sat silent, dazed and 'brooding o'er his woe.' His wiry body withered away; his spirit was crushed at last; heartbroken he sank quietly into his grave.

For that brave deed, that Duke—although his sons were sons of Belial—deserved the noble order of the Garter, which indeed he got soon afterwards from his grateful Queen. He was an hereditary law-giver to all of us; became a privy councillor, and was deservedly addressed by the Sovereign whom he served so well, as 'Most High, Potent, and Noble Prince, Our right trusty and right entirely beloved Cousin and Councillor.'

Such are the men that the king delighteth to honour, and such are the 'Grace, Wisdom, and Understanding' with which our nobility are endowed in answer to those heartfelt prayers for them, which have gone up from millions of British throats, Sunday after Sunday, for centuries.

GAMEKEEPERS AND THEIR KIND.

I AM so afraid of giving some offence if I attempt to follow further the uncertain laws of precedence, upon which you are, I am sorry to say, such much keener critics than I, that henceforward I propose we take things as they come across our path, as we ramble through Arcadia in quest of specimens.

We naturalists shall thus have time to note

in passing a curious undiscovered beetle, or the fossil footprint of a late land grabber, instead of blindly running on to catch the next in order in the social catalogue, which should be, perhaps, a bishop with his comforting old countenance blended of benevolence and margarine, his sleeves of purity inflated like his pillow-cases on his washerwoman's wind-rocked line, his sweet salad-oily sentences, and his martyr's resignation as he starves himself to give his widow's mites in charity out of his hard-earned pittance of five thousand pounds a year.

Let us leave lords then for a time.

When, overwhelmed with a despairing sense of your inferiority, you are sneaking out of the Great man's park in the direction of the Back-lodge, you are certain to be seen by a velveteen-clad footpad called a 'Keeper.' I say advisedly 'to be seen,' for you will not see that worthy unless you have a little dog or a bulging pocket with you. In these latter cases, the velveteen highwayman accosts you at a lonely turn and quietly but clearly hints to you that your puppy owes his life to him, or that it is solely out of his exceptional consideration for your feelings that he doesn't search your pockets for a ferret or a rabbit hidden therein, and that therefore he should be extremely pleased to 'drink your 'ealth.'

Should you be strong-minded enough to leave that keeper to drink your health at his expense, it is possible you may be sharply told that your shortest path out of the Park lies in a direction different to that you were previously pursuing.

Following this intimation, which, like a

queen's invitation, is akin to a command, you may find yourself in five minutes hopelessly lost in a maze of covert 'rides,' with these illuminated texts greeting you from gallows-posts around: 'Guns and Mantraps is set Here'; 'Porchers Beware???' 'All Tresspasers will be Persecuted'; 'All Dorgs Found Here will be Destroyed.' These hieroglyphic works of art are due to the collective wisdom of the head-keeper and under-hencoop-colourman to My Lord.

As you stand there, stunned at reading the awful consequences of your crime in losing your way, another velveteen ogre pounces down upon you and brutally demands: 'What the devil be you adoin of 'ere?' At the same moment your dog's off hind leg is caught in a villainous steel trap thirty yards away, and you rightly opine by reason of his piteous howls that he is still nipped and is suffering such agony as will drive him directly to tear off his unlucky leg. There is no time to stand on your rights. Velveteens simply laughs a large, loud laugh if you are indignant, and you are only too glad to slip a half-crown into his capacious claw, on condition that he instantly releases your dog and puts you both safely into the nearest high road. There, you breathe again and begin to boil over with terrible threats at the keeper of how the law shall punish him; he replies by an aggravating grin and goes back to divide a shilling—which he swears is all you gave him—with his confederate, the first footpad that waylaid you.

If you are not used to the artless ways of Arcadia, you will, in your rage, rush off to the nearest lawyer and order him to prosecute those

rascals. If he is fairly honest, he will gently explain the good Game-laws to you, and he will slyly insinuate that the magistrates, who would try your case, are all strict game preservers and close friends of Lord Kartridge, the keeper's employer, and that the oaths of one keeper, and if necessary of two or more, are of much greater value to a country justice of the Peace than the word or oath of any poor, untitled stranger.

But if your lawyer be of that enterprising and by no means uncommon kind which sacrifices everything to his only god, 'a six and eightpence,' he will encourage you to go on with your case; so you must stifle your indignation until Wednesday next at noon, the weekly 'bench day,' when the 'Great Unpaid' will sit in solemn judgment at the Court of 'Petty Sessions' in the landlord-ridden town five miles away.

Your solicitor, who sometimes does the mean and dirty County Court work for Lord Kartridge, advises you that since you insist on instant satisfaction without waiting for a more dilatory course, your only remedy will be to summon the keeper for torturing and permanently injuring your dog. 'Nobody actually touched you, so you cannot prosecute for assault.' As you know nothing of law and are chiefly anxious to expose the vile conspiracy of which you have been the victim, you agree to hang your accusation on the peg suggested, and so, quietly giving a golden fee to the reporter for the local paper for which he promises to *send up* a verbatim report of the proceedings, you wait, with great inconvenience and at some expense, in the neighbourhood until Wednesday next.

On entering the Court you find that there are four cases to-day and yours is last on the list. The first defendant is convicted of killing a hare. He pleads earnestly for mercy. 'My wife caught a bad chill out a'cleanin' turmots for Varmer Harden jest a'ter her last youngun was barned. Her got so weak, she wur forced to bide abed a bit, and the club doctor said as her must have a bit o' meat, but I couldn't buy ne'er a bit, for I've got seven childurn, fower on um at school, and I seed a hur alollop in along an' eatin the cabbage in our garn thot night, and I couldn't seem to help a killin on in an makin a bit o' broth for the 'oman.' The chairman then reads out a letter he has privately received from Sir Thomas, saying that he hopes his tenant's shepherd (the culprit) will 'be made an example of,' as his keeper assures him that he is 'a very suspicious character.' Sentence—'thirty shillings or a month'; so the shepherd, who will lose his place when he comes out, is taken off, without a murmur, to undergo his month. (His 'oman an' her seven childurn' must, of course, go to the Workhouse to-morrow.)

The next is a farmer's son, convicted of shooting a partridge on a Sunday on his father's land. Before sentence is passed, he humbly 'begs to say as he will leave home for good if let off merciful, and his father is just about sorry as it happened, and begs as the landlord won't give him notice this time as he's a old tenant.' After a severe reprimand the sporting youth is fined three pounds, which he pays.

The third convict is a decrepit crone, who keeps mumbling and crying miserably. She pleads

guilty again and again—'Yes I doned it maay the Lord forgie me'—to 'stealing deadwood from Lord Kartridge's Great Hornbeam Brake.' The greyheaded monster of iniquity looks too weak to carry a pound more than her palsied skeleton of a body, but she admits having 'carr'd off on my 'ead dree bits o' sticks jus' 'nough to make a bit o' vire o' Zunday which I've got only two loaves an a shillin a wik from porrish.' Sentence—'One shilling or seven days.' Tremblingly she unknots her dirty 'hankurchur,' and hands up to the 'bench' all the money she has in the world—a warm sixpence. On taking it the chairman says 'You must pay the rest by next Wednesday or you will be sent to prison.' So the tired old hag jogs painfully homeward—four miles—and must walk another eight next week, unless 'the Lord' who has already 'forgien her' meanwhile mercifully makes her take a much longer journey.

Your case is then called, two hours after the time appointed. Elbowing your way through a reeking throng of gigantic gamekeepers, you now get a close and clear view of the solemn magistrates in all their awful dignity. Their faces are so forbidding and so grand that even had they wigs and gowns you could not respect them more.

The chairman is General Sir Jackson Geegee, K.C.B., a retired Indian cavalry officer, as mighty as he is little, as impertinent as he is ignorant. He was made a military knight on account of his weakness in a charge during a skirmish in the Mutiny. His puny strength could not control his maddened steed, which ran away with him far in advance of his heavier men straight towards the enemy, just before reaching which it was

luckily shot dead. Colonel Geegee's stunted body had before found ample cover from the bullets of the blacks behind his horse's head and a rolled cloak in front of him, and he was now protected by his dead horse's haunches, under which he crept apparently stunned, until his own men swept by and returned to bear him back to shelter. That lucky charge drove back the enemy, and the General commanding, who was poor but a great friend of Geegee who was rich, made much of the obviously gallant little Colonel, who had charged ahead of his men in the most dashing manner until stunned by his horse shot under him. Soon afterwards the gentle Geegee blossomed into the full blown blight—General Sir Jackson Geegee, K.C.B.

The chairman has an advantage over his learned brother magistrate in having gained—like all cavalry officers who have spent a lifetime in India—a thorough knowledge of English law. He has not much shooting of his own, but as he is very fond of pheasants he is very fond of Lord Kartridge, over whose immense preserves he is often asked to shoot.

The junior magistrate is a yellowish youth of twenty-two—the imbecile son and heir of the County member. Having utterly failed to pass his examination for the army, this disappointed babe became a reckless hunter, until his ape-like head was further flattened by a fall on to a stony gateway over which his horse refused to jump. It took quite four months for his doting father to discover that the brains of his son were softer even than they were before. Being now eligible to become a judge in 'the justest country in the

world,' his maternal uncle, the lord-lieutenant, finding that the imbecile must stay at home, made him a magistrate and Deputy-lieutenant for the County, and there His Worship now reposes, with freckled, sibilant nose, and mackerel mouth, and listless bleary eyes.

On your story being begun, the chairman summarily shuts it up by the unanswerable argument that it is merely 'a trumped up charge' to meet the other, which he will now hear, brought against you by Lord Kartridge's two keepers for 'trespassing with a dog in pursuit of game in an enclosed pheasant preserve.' After listening to the most astonishing statements from the two velveteens, who corroborate each other in the most glib manner, the president, dashing cavalry colonel as he is, delivers his charge at you without further waste of time. 'I nonsuit you on your frivolous accusation, and I fine you forty shillings or a month, and costs, for being found in a pheasant covert for an unlawful purpose, quite out of any honest man's path. I fear that I have erred unduly on the side of leniency in my sentence, considering that you materially aggravated your offence by offering a large bribe to two trusted keepers, which they very properly refused' (loud applause in Court, which is not 'instantly suppressed').

You then retire from the hall of JUSTICE, cheered on your exit by the playful sneers and encouraging giggles of the victorious velveteen audience, and by the complacent smiles of the incorruptible judges who have so disinterestedly upheld the spotless purity of British justice. It is almost unnecessary to add that the local news-

paper, which you had foolishly paid to be impartial, although its very existence depended on the good will of the county magnates, contained not a word of your true story, but made you out to be a sneaking, poaching thief, who ought to be in prison yet.

Probably you will go home a simmering revolutionist, foaming to tear into tatters the remains of the rotten fabric of feudalism in which the land is still wrapped up. You will very wickedly wish to strip and stripe with the 'cat' those learned gentlemen, whom you will possibly describe as 'the chartered tyrants who weekly perpetrate that legalised job called 'justices' justice,' but in a fortnight, you will again be a sleek and contented tory singing 'Rule Britannia' at a county dinner to the inspiring tune of your tory member's champagne.

A celebrated naturalist has said that there is at least one honest keeper in each county. This was possibly true once, but it is probably an exaggerated estimate in our day. I have hunted long and often through many counties in the hope of finding this rare and beautiful bird, but I have not yet been so lucky as to catch him; indeed, I am beginning to think that, like the Dodo, he must be extinct, if he ever existed at all. In competition for rewards which I have offered from time to time for the discovery of an honest keeper, who, on subjection to analysis, should prove to be a real, unadulterated specimen—I have had many samples submitted to me, from the 'ticket-of-leave man' down to the 'younger son,' but, so far, I have not found one of them to be without guile.

One small landowner, who had taken great interest in the question, assured me that mine was a hopeless quest. He said that on his place every pheasant bore a lettered bangle round its left leg (if that leg had not been shot off), the rabbits were branded by battalions, and the very hares, on their heads, were all numbered; yet he could not prevent private poaching. From his making some almost incredible statements, however, I have a suspicion that that authority must have been a keeper himself once.

I am still engaged on the qualitative analysis of a deaf and dumb, but harmless, lunatic, who, for half a crown a week, for three months every year, is engaged by a squireen to 'slop around' a lonely swamp and watch the eggs which woodcocks lay therein. I am already sure he never steals any of those eggs, and I do not yet despair of proving him a keeper of the purest water.

Some great game preservers have imported unfledged keepers, too young to have any guile, on to their estates from distant reputable districts, in the hope that they might grow up uncontaminated. I am assured, however, that it is a useless and costly experiment, as it is impossible to acclimatise the chicken and rear him up so as to remain an honest bird. There seems to be an instinctive tendency to revert to the characteristic propensities of the original stock.

It is due to the keeper to say that his regular wages are too small. He lives the life of a local Ishmael, 'his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.' A licensed sneak, labourers and farmers look upon him as an 'informant,' paid according to the number of convic-

tions he secures. During the long winter nights, he lays up a certain store of rheumatism for future consumption, by lying about in ditches and under damp covert hedges, watching for poachers, who generally break his head if they come across him. During 'battue' days, he is much more certain of being shot than he would be in a fierce colonial war; excited lordlings, shortsighted squires, and cockney sportsmen vie with one another in peppering his callous gaiters, or in 'damaging an eye with a glanced shot, you know.'

He gets no extra wages if a sunny season grows more game, and he gets discharged if the wet June kills the young birds. Altogether, if he were not a cold-blooded creature incapable of feeling, the keeper's lot is not a happy one.

On most great estates, Velvetens has head-money for the vermin he traps and shoots. 'Vermin,' if you please, includes his neighbour's cat, his neighbour's dog, and all the pretty wild wood birds and beasts, such as jays, magpies, owls, hedgehogs, weasels, stoats, polecats, jackdaws, and hawks. Here is a verbatim abstract from a monthly 'Vermin Voucher' now lying before me:—

| | |
|---|-------|
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| an 2 stot 19 hed at twppens a ed | 3 4 |
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You may perhaps have noticed that there is a trifling error in George's arithmetic, in George's favour. Now George happens to be head keeper, and, with the characteristic cunning of his class, he knows that his master does not look too closely into his accounts, so long as there is plenty of stuff to shoot. George justly boasts that he taught himself 'most all the learnin' as he der know.' He says he doesn't approve of corporal punishment and over-pressure at schools, because if boys 'don't take to learnin' nateral like, as he did, thaay wun't learn at one end by bein' wopt on t'other.' I trust you will join with me in congratulating Daniel on his extraordinary freedom from vermin, and the young Lord Edward on the good time he will doubtless have in his next Vac. with the live badger and his pet bull-pup 'Hell.'

A VILLAGE VAGABOND.

THE heavy clanging of the engine-bell awoke me. Raising the lattice, I looked out to see what sort of station we were entering. There were a dozen small frame-houses, two or three log-cabins, the mighty river lying asleep in the sun, like a long, lazy lake, and thickly-wooded heights beyond. The only sign of life about the settlement was just before me. A tame Indian's hideous squaw was squatting on a boulder, and cracking nuts with a pebble, whilst her sulky husband seized and chewed the kernels in solemn silence.

The copper-coloured brave looked up lan-

guidly with his sad and weary eyes at the train, as it stopped opposite him. Suddenly he caught sight of a fresh streak of yellow paint on the outside of the car below my window. Advancing to it with the stately stride of his race, the simple, savage child gazed at it intently and admiringly for a moment, and then slowly traced the gaudy stripe to the end and back again with his sundried finger. 'Ugh' he muttered resignedly, looking like a meek and bullied little stepson does at his spoilt half-brother's new rocking horse. Then he drew the only weapon he possessed, a broken, black-handled, English steel fork, with which he pursued and slew a bloodthirsty enemy on the war-path in the tangled forest of coarse black hair, which shielded his head and shoulders from the broiling sun. After the usual sign of friendship he offered to sell me his wife for a dollar. I said she was too dear. He then said he would take a quarter dollar and a drink of 'Jersey lightning' for his better half. I, however, was weak enough to decline the bargain with thanks and a chew of 'bacca. In gratitude, he groped amongst the bundle of rags inside his blanket, and at last unwrapped and proudly showed me a worthless fragment of glistening iron-pyrites—his 'charm.' 'Ugh,' he again remarked, this time like the spoilt owner of the rocking-horse; then, hiding away his treasure, he turned, gobbled up the rest of his long-suffering squaw's nuts, and without another word, marched off, cat-like, in his soft moccasins, closely followed by his slave, or wife, and I saw no more of them.

I had been travelling as cheaply—and, therefore, as slowly and uncomfortably—as possible,

night and day, from the West, where I had been prowling about amongst the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains. Hungry, parched, tired, and cramped with dozing doubled up on the short seat, I longed to rest at once, as the place looked quiet and comparatively cool; so I suddenly resolved to stay the night here instead of continuing the tedious journey. Shaking the layers of brown dust off my hat and coat, and buckling all my baggage on to my shoulder-strap, I walked down to the end of the car and asked the brakeman the name of the place, just as the conductor was plaintively howling his 'All abooarrd.' 'Corbeau's Bluff, and there's the boss o' the camp,' he replied, guessing my purpose with Yankee smartness, and nodding towards a tall, bony, iron-grey man standing in a buck-board wagon, and apparently quenching an invisible but furious fire with successive charges of tobacco-juice.

The grizzled 'boss' was the proprietor of the only hotel in Corbeau's Bluff—a little frame shanty a furlong away in front of us, with its side facing the station labelled in very large letters 'Fifth Avenue Hotel.'

We jolted up to the house, talking of Corbeau the French trapper, who was tortured here to death by Indians in the old savage days. On registering my name, with the Englishman's usual modesty, as 'from England,' the Innkeeper, anxious possibly to assure me of his own superior nationality, remarked, 'Guessed, stranger, you was a Britisher,' and, as he checked my bag, added, 'It's real seldom an Englishman stops off around here, but maybe you've landed in this yer city to prospect for the lone woman as was taken

off the train here yest'day?' Not being a well-to-do tourist, I did not resent my strange host's inquisitiveness, but told him I had left the train merely because I was tired, and his 'city' looked a quiet enough place to rest in for a night, adding that I had never heard of the woman he mentioned; who was she?

'She says she's from your Hampshire, and is going to her husband out West, but unless he lights on her afore next sun-up, I'm thinking she'll never set eyes on him again on this yer earth. This yer gal's got no grit, and neither she nor her little kid will last out many hours, I reckon. I happened down at the depot when the train came in yesterday, on the look-out' for any one for me, and I saw the conductor carryin' a sick woman and a bundle out of the emigrant car; why, she ain't no heavier ner-a greaser's saddle. They said she was adyin' and they didn't like takin' her any further in the train; would I look arter her a spell? We laid her on some leaves in the bottom of my waggon, and I drove her as solid as I could to old Hogan's the logger's, recknin' as how she would be better fixed up there by his old woman, than she'd have been at my house where there's only a young help. When we had fixed up a bed there for her and put her on it, she told us some about herself, and she looked about as lonesome-like and pityble as any woman as I ever yet sot eyes on.'

My host had the grim, resolute aspect of an old frontiersman, and looked the last person to be moved by any tender feeling, but he was of too rude, too passionate a nature, to be able to dissemble, and I could see through his rough exterior

that he felt a keen sympathy for the forlorn stranger, whom he had so good-naturedly befriended.

‘Why I rode behind old ‘Stonewall’—our old gin’ral,—God rest his bones,—through the War,’ he went on, unconsciously drawing up his gaunt wiry frame,—‘an’ saw droves of poor devils die, but they was men,—fightin’ men,—an’ had pardners not far off. I didn’t take no ‘count o’ that, although ‘twas awful sometimes; but when I was atakin’ this yer lone gal an’ her littl’un amoanin’ for the milk he couldn’t get, an’ both of ‘em without a cent an’ thousands o’ miles away from home an’ nobody near ‘em as they knew,—why—why—I tell yer, pard, it kind o’ made my throat feel as if it didn’t want to speak for a spell,’ and, turning round, he took a little time trying to hook my coat up.

After a pause, I asked where the invalid was. The innkeeper said he would have shown me himself, but that he must stay at home to ‘tend the bar.’ He came out, however, to the end of the shingle-roofed verandah, and pointing down to the river directed me: ‘You keep right on along the levee till you come to the rocks; then you’ll strike a trail as will take you through the bresh to a little clearin’ by the river again, where you’ll see a shanty an’ a pile o’ logs just inside the corral; thet’s it.’

Carrying a chunk of ice and a flask of apple-brandy, as possibly useful to the sufferer, I set out on my little expedition; for somehow I was curious to see the strange emigrants whom fortune or misfortune had cast out here so far from home.

I soon struck the trail winding snake-like in

and out amongst a tangled scrub of sumac and maple-bushes, which seemed to be displaying to the scorching sun the new autumn dresses he had made for them. Well enough he might look down complacently on his handiwork here, for he certainly never saw such gorgeous colouring in the foggy England he had gazed askance at a few hours ago.

I clambered up on a huge, grey boulder, and stood revelling in the bewildering beauty of the landscape. All around me lay an undulating hollow, covered with a tumbled tapestry of pointed maple leaves interwoven with the Scarlet Oak and Sumac and laced through and through with the Virginia creeper. This exquisite embroidery was irregularly worked without plan or pattern in every possible shade of red and purple, crimson and bright orange, gold and scarlet, brown and buff. Though there were daring contrasts in the colouring, yet all combined in a bewitching harmony of broad, rich splendour resting against a sombre, deep-green background of cypresses and junipers and pines, massed upon a hill which rose abruptly a mile or two away.

Behind me lay the mighty Mississippi, like a lake without a ripple on its silvered surface—a fitting mirror for the sun and shore, and above all stretched the far off-canopy of heaven, so blue, so clear, without a cloud to fleck its liquid depths.

The thin grey smoke of Corbeau's Bluff, which almost imperceptibly arose away to westward, alone reminded me that I was near the haunts of thankless men.

I don't know how long I stood there, dreaming in this paradise. God's grandest handiwork some-

times fills me, when I am alone, with a strange sad feeling of despair, struggling with a burning flush of gratitude that he made me too. At last my reverie was roughly broken by the harsh croaking of an angry raven hovering over me a moment, and then winging its way heavily along in the direction of the dying emigrant. Sadly I got down off the rock, and slowly toddled on along the winding trail.

In a few minutes I reached the clearing, and found the corral marked by a tumble-down 'snake-fence' of split cedar logs laid in zigzags one above another, and there, close to the river-bank, stood a low log-cabin with a patched and tumbled roof. Having quieted the inevitable squatter's dog, I entered the rude porch, over which a brown Kentucky vine was straggling, and knocked at the door. A gaunt, grey-headed woman of sixty, presumably 'Hogan's old woman,' half opened the heavy door, and eyed me sternly. Her face was dark, careworn, and deeply furrowed, as are many pioneer women's faces, and seeing some one she had never seen before, she looked coldly and suspiciously at me. When, however, I said I was English, and had come to see my sick countrywoman, she seemed somehow relieved, and, without having spoken a word, she quietly led me in.

Coming suddenly out of the bright sunlight into the single, long, low, dark room of which the log-house consisted, I could not at first see distinctly what it contained. I soon made out, however, at the farther corner a bed of buffalo hides laid on dried twigs and leaves. Asleep on this, her head pillowed on a dressed deerskin

wrapped round some fern, and with a coarse Indian blanket thrown across her half-dressed body, lay a very thin and pale young English-woman. Bloodless though her face was, there was no mistaking her nationality. I should not think she was much over twenty, although an anxious, frightened expression, which had not deserted her even in sleep, made her look older.

The loose, nut-brown hair falling over the white deerskin and around her troubled forehead, and the long, dark eyelashes gave the wan, worn face a singularly sad and unearthly appearance. Yet I soon formed an impression that not long ago the owner had been one of those bright and comely maids, that one often sees waiting at table in a comfortable manor-house at home.

At the end of the bed was all that the vagabond possessed in the world, wrapped up in a very English-looking blue and white check apron on which was sewn under big cross stitches a tattered piece of paper, bearing this simple superscription in a childish 'round text-hand' tending a little down hill: 'Ruth Mavis

passenger to Montana.'

The innocent, simple villager had directed her bundle just as she would if she had travelled by carrier's cart from her home to service at the county town. She did not know that Montana was a considerably larger place than England.

The old woman now spoke for the first time. She said shortly in a low, hoarse voice that the innkeeper had brought down such two or three dainties as he could get, to try to tempt the sick girl to eat, but that up to now she had swallowed nothing but a drop of milk.

She wondered at my ignorance in asking if there was a doctor anywhere within reach. She had mixed up some 'herb-tea,' but the sick one would not touch it.

Ruth now awoke, and as she struggled to sit up, I saw for the first time that she hugged closely to her shrunken breast a tiny baby but a few days old, yet with pain and death already written plainly on its pinched and puny face.

The mother, turning towards me, trembled slightly, and the frightened look grew still more marked. Taking her thin hand and calling her by name, I told her I was from England and had come to see how she was. Starting up wildly and looking at me with intense eagerness in her large blue eyes, she asked ardently—gasping for breath between the words—if I had seen her Charlie, she had written to him from New York, and was he coming now? I thought to comfort her by saying that her husband would soon be here, and that we must get her quite well by the time he came. I suppose my own voice trembled or she saw that I had hidden the truth from her, for she paused a moment, and then a far-off look of bitter disappointment and despair passed over her pale face as she turned her timid eyes away from me. She nervously picked a wisp or two of wool from the coarse blanket; then her lips quivered as two or three large hot tears fell from her down-cast eyes, and she murmured querulously 'Oh, Charlie, Charlie——' but she could choke back her agony no longer, and clasping her tiny baby convulsively to her lips, her head sank down over it and she sobbed as if her heart would break.

The old woman knitted her brows and slowly

shook her head, as if prophetic of what the end would soon be. Getting a cup of milk and brandy she held it patiently till the paroxysm was over, and then silently insisted on the sick girl tasting it. Just then a low moan escaped the baby's lips, and the mother pushing aside the cup gazed anxiously at her child. A momentary spasm racked the feeble body of the little starveling; it stretched out its puny arms, and clenched its wee fingers, and the small head was shaken and bent back with pain. The tremor as suddenly left the tiny frame, and Ruth Mavis was childless.

No one spoke or moved.

The mother's eyes were riveted in a glassy stare at the lifeless mite in her arms. Moments, that seemed hours, passed. Then suddenly one long, last kiss on the little lips; one sigh of passionate despair, with the agonised cry, as she turned up her troubled face to heaven: 'Oh God—My Father—Take me too,—Take me with my little one,'—and the distracted woman fainted and fell back.

I took up the diminutive corpse and laid it in an upturned saddle at the other end of the cabin, covering it with a few vine-leaves from the porch, whilst the old woman quietly brought the mother back to life.

There was again a long silence, which was broken at last by Ruth Mavis calling me in a low voice to her bedside. 'I shall go soon now,' she said quietly, gazing steadfastly out of the window at the slanting sun, 'I shall go when the sun goes down. I know now I can never see my Charlie any more,—poor Charlie; I wish—I wish

—he would come and kiss me once—only once—before I—before I—die.’ She shuddered slightly at that word. ‘If he comes after I am gone, will you tell him that I love him as I loved him long ago? Oh, Charlie—Charlie.’

Her mind now evidently wandered back to her life at home, and particularly to that which had happened in the last few months. It seemed a real relief to her to tell me what she was pondering over and why she left her home. She had a marvellously clear memory of little details and of old conversations, but her failing brain seemed to prevent her relating the incidents of her story in their proper sequence. I was able to gather, however, from the disjointed fragments of her history and from her emphatic repetition of the main particulars, that she and her husband had been driven out from their home and fatherland as evil-doers.

Leaving a housemaid’s place about three years ago, she had married Charlie Mavis, a young under-gardener to Sir Daniel Wright, a very wealthy Hampshire landowner. She and Charlie had lived very happily together in a cottage near the Hall for a little over two years, and were very proud of their little Robin, who was then fifteen months old.

One day at the end of January, the head keeper told Sir Daniel that he had seen Charlie Mavis, on the night before, poaching in ‘Hawk Gorse,’ and although he couldn’t catch him, yet, as proof that he was not mistaken, he had found Mavis still undressed on suddenly breaking open his door, a little after midnight. Now Sir Daniel’s chief ambition was to murder more game than

any other landowner in his county. Having been a magistrate for many years, he possessed the rural J.P.'s marvellous instinct for detecting a poacher at a glance, and also the J.P.'s proper contempt for all poachers' witnesses and cross-examiners. On his keeper's evidence he swore like a noble M.F.H., and stalking out to a gang of men working in his garden, ordered whichever of them happened to be Charles Mavis to stand forward. There and then he discharged him, adding, in the presence of the others, that he would take care his character as a thief and poacher followed him.

Mavis, conscious that he was absolutely innocent, denied the false witness brought against him, and pleaded that his being still undressed at midnight was because he had to go out then to see after the hot-house fires. He begged hard that his wife, with whom he had remained at home all that evening, should be heard in his defence. Sir Daniel damned his victim for daring to defend his honest name. 'He must quit his work and cottage; but if he emigrated to America at once, instead of becoming a professional poacher, his steerage passage would be paid.'

Next day, Ruth crept up to the Hall in fear and trembling, and, choking down her grief, begged to see 'The Lady'—hoping she might intercede for them. Though Harriet, my Lady Wright, was an exalted English Dame, her heart was hard and proud. She was terribly indignant at her powdered menial's message that the poacher's wife had begged to speak to her. So the supercilious lackey bade the weeping Ruth begone, with 'Me Laddy says she hain't at 'ome.'

Her head throbbing with sorrow and despair, her eyes blinded with the tears which she could not keep back, Ruth walked slowly home. On opening the door, she saw her husband with his face buried in his arms, resting on the little table. He was silent; he did not look up, for he knew by the quiet way in which his wife had lifted the cottage latch that her errand had been useless, that there was no mercy for them. Ruth trembled when she saw that he had evidently cast aside the Bible which the unconscious little Robin was playing with upon the cold stone floor. The Mavises were only young and simple villagers; they had known nothing of the world, its selfish greed and cruel heart, till now. They had no money, and they had no friends, for the other cottagers were afraid of talking to a poacher lest they should also be convicted.

The kindly clergyman alone called on them in their misery, and comforted the young wife by telling her how shocked he was that an old Sunday-school girl of his should sin so grievously in trying to shield a wicked husband, and then he left, bidding her remember the charitable catechism he used to teach, and exhorting her to pray that her past sins might be forgiven, and that she might lead a better life. And so the harmless, wretched Ruth was frightened into feeling that indeed she was a 'miserable sinner.'

She and Charlie tearfully talked over many wise and unwise schemes as they sat up, sleepless, through the long, long night; but the bitter thought that they must suffer cruelly for a crime of which they were entirely innocent, that all that they possessed—their good name—had been

filched from them, seemed to drive them to despair and crush all spirit out of them.

Young Mavis had always worked in a great man's garden. He was not strong; he knew he was not fit for any other labour. He knew it would be useless to apply for work to any other landowner. He had had very little 'schooling,' and he couldn't pay the necessary premium to go into a nursery-garden. There was nothing for them then but to starve, or emigrate, and possibly starve then. So with heavy hearts they settled that Charlie should first go abroad, and send for Ruth when he had made a home.

'The frost was giving and the snow was thawin', when we started at daylight for the station,' she said, 'but the fog was very thick and made me cough, and Charlie wanted me to turn back, but I wouldn't, for I wanted to see the last of him. So we walked on slowly, for the roads was just as bad as they could be, and the station was six miles off from home. We carried little Robin in turns, but Charlie carried his bundle on his back all the way, he said 'twasn't much to carry. Once we went across some fields and down a lane 'cause 'twas shorter, and the snow an' wet got over the tops of my boots and made my frock wet through, but I didn't tell Charlie, for he seemed all sad an' didn't say much.'

'I talked to Robin now and then, for we seemed so quiet an' lonely like, an' Robin was as good as gold, he never cried once, going, but kept on sort of purrin' and talkin' to himself. On the way we sat down on a heap of stones for breakin' by the roadside, and there we ate our bit of bread and bacon; but I couldn't eat any, for it seemed

to choke me, and Charlie didn't eat much either. When Charlie kissed me the last time, and hugged me and Robin close up, I felt kind of dazed, and didn't seem able to feel that he was going away; but when I saw the train move off, an' Charlie astandin' at the window and rubbin' his eyes once with his sleeve when he thought I couldn't see, I felt a kind of cold chill run all through me, and something seemed to say as I should never see him any more. I trembled all over, an' then got hot, and felt sure as I shouldn't keep from fainting. But I thought that Robin might drop down too, and so I didn't faint; and then I started out for home again.'

'I can't tell how tired I was, an' what trouble I was in on my way home. I thought I should very like get a lift from some passing cart, but n'ur a one came by, my way, for the roads was lonely, and too bad and slippery for horses to be out in. Sometimes I felt as if I should sink down in the road, for my knees ached and got cramped, and my feet were all blistered, and my frock and things all heavy with the snow an' mud, and Robin began to fret and seemed to get heavier as we went on, and I could hardly keep my arms up to carry him. At last it seemed as if the bare trees an' bushes was makin' fun of me, for they seemed to dance and swim round, and the road in the distance on in front and the snow on the hedge-banks all moved up and down, and made my eyes weak, an' so I sat down on the roadside, an' I s'pose almost gone with trouble, and, being tired-out and hungry, I cried to God to let me die, but then I looked at Robin an' wonder'd what would come to him if I was dead,

an' so I prayed to God to forgive me and help me home. When I was rested a bit, an' tried to get up, I seemed all stiff, and how I crawled home at last I hardly know. When I got home I had walked twelve miles, and I was never very strong, and the fire was out and cold, an' so I went to bed, for I couldn't eat anything then, an' with Robin at my breast, I cried myself to sleep.'

Four months afterwards she received the first and last letter from her husband, saying that he had found work at a place called 'Montana,' and that as soon as he had built a hut he would send for her to come out to him. Two more long, lonely months passed by without a letter. One afternoon in August, the Rector, who had kept aloof from Ruth since her husband left, called unexpectedly, and told her that her Ladyship did not think it proper for so young and poor a woman to occupy a cottage any longer, and that she must leave by that day month. Ruth had kept body and soul together by a miserable pittance derived from stitching 'driving-gloves,' fetched fortnightly from a tanner in the market town. She felt almost stunned by this fresh blow; she was afraid to tell the clergyman the condition in which her husband had left her, lest her Ladyship—especially after the broad hints of the parson—should accuse her of a sin worse even than the crime for which she and her husband were now suffering.

Keeping her own secret, therefore, and knowing she must not delay her journey a day longer than was necessary, she sold the remainder of her modest cottage chattels. Then, looking for the

last time on the place where she and her forefathers had been born, and which she had never left since she was married—Ruth with little Robin started off alone to die in exile amongst strangers.

‘I was broken down before leaving Liverpool,’ she said, ‘and at sea I became too weak to get up from my narrow bunk in the steerage. I couldn’t go to sleep, but kept on rolling with the cruel ship from side to side, an’ fancyin’ that the voyage would *never* end. Sometimes I felt that if the thumping engines would stay still for only half an hour, an’ let the ship lie flat, as I should soon get well, but on an’ on they went, and the smell of the heated oil was horrible. I couldn’t eat the food as we had given us, but some of the other emigrants was very good to me, and brought me little things for me to try to eat. There were many hundreds in the steerage, and they was all poor like me. Most of them had had much trouble, and many had been in trouble more years than I had months. But they was all pretty quiet and didn’t complain much, and some of them looked so old, an’ starved, and ill. They seemed to pity me because I was so weak, and some knew as I was goin’ to be a mother to another baby soon, an’ they quite loved and spoilt little Robin. He was a quaint, sturdy little urchin, an’ everybody liked to play with him.

On the seventh day as we had been at sea, a rough-headed, merry Irish boy took Robin up to play on deck, an’ promised to bring him back when he was tired. About two hours after, he started to carry him down the steps again when he was tired, an’ they both fell right down on to the deck below. My poor—little—Robin’s head.

—was—underneath, an' had the weight of both boys. They brought him—all stunned—and bleeding—along to me; but, somehow, I couldn't believe that he was dying. But he never knew me again, an' they took him quietly away—from me—after he was—cold, an' threw him—into—into—the sea that night, an' then I began to feel as if my heart was stabbed, an' yet I couldn't cry, an' my poor head got so hot, it seemed as if the blood would burst it.'

This shock was the beginning of the end. Next day Ruth Mavis gave premature birth to the feeble mite, whose little corpse I had not long ago taken from her arms. Four days afterwards the ship arrived at New York, and mother and child went ashore, to fall somehow or other into the hands of one of the low, German lodging-house-keepers, vultures always waiting there to prey on the unwary emigrant. Disgusted with the treatment she received at this loathsome den of thieves, and having only a few dollars left, she wrote a letter to her husband, addressed to him, 'Montana,' asking him to meet her. Then taking up her baby and her bundle, she fled secretly and in haste out of the cellar where she had been imprisoned, and found her way, frightened as she was, all up through New York, to the Central Railway Depot. Thence she started on her overland journey, having only a confused idea of the time it would take to reach her destination, and without any idea whatever of the misery of being penned up, ill, all day and night in an emigrant's car, going ever on and on, over hot and dusty plains. For two days and nights she bore up uncomplainingly, but, owing to want of absolutely

necessary nursing and medical attendance, to insufficient food, and to terrible anxiety, she grew gradually and surely weaker, until, at last, her strength gave way entirely, and she was lifted fainting from the car, and brought to Hogan's cabin, as we have already seen.

During the last part of her narrative, the pauses were longer and more frequent ; her voice was lower, and the long-drawn breathing was more difficult. I often begged the dying woman to try to sleep, but after a short silence she would again refer to some incident or other that had rooted itself in her mind. At last she complained of thirst, and the old woman gave her a cup of iced milk, which seemed to strengthen her a little, for she struggled to sit up. We lifted and supported her so that she could look around. Her mind was quite clear now.

Turning round she took up the old woman's hard, brown hand and kissed it. Looking up at the dark, furrowed face, which for the first time seemed to twitch, and even to relax a little, she said : ' You've been so good to me, tho' you didn't know me—*so* good. I have nothing left to give you but the little as is in the bundle, but I know God will be good to you some day for it.' The old woman never spoke a word ; her own life had been too hard to be easily moved ; I was surprised to see her a moment later stoop down and hastily kiss the sick girl's forehead and then hurriedly stride across to the door and look out.

Through the large open window, the last rays of the sinking sun, softened by reflection from the motionless river, cast a supernatural brightness over Ruth's pure, pale face. Possibly it was this

which brought back to her mind a verse from an old hymn, which she now crooned mournfully and half unconsciously to herself:

‘When, in my wanderin’, the sun gone down,
Darkness comes over me, my rest a stone;
Still in my dream I’d be, nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.’

She paused, as if in deep thought for some moments, and then her lips moved silently, perhaps in prayer.

The sun had gone down now, and the cool breeze, which follows it in the West, stole in and played very gently with the long, brown hair.

Resting her cold hand in mine, she murmured, ‘I am going home now; God *will* take me with my little ones.’ Another stillness, and then in a low, trembling voice, ‘Our Father,’ pausing after each petition. ‘And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive—them—that trespass—against—us—, And——’ but the whisper died away, as a flash of pain crossed and left her brow, and she sank slowly down.

A moment later, and the old frightened look had gone for ever. Rest and Peace were sleeping in the gentle face. The emigrant had passed away to the promised land; the wandering of the weary vagabond was over.

LANDLAWS.

If you go into a garden after a stormy summer night, you may see the crooked tracks and trails of slimy worms about the ground and every low green herb around, but probably you will not see

a worm itself: so, if you ramble through the rural districts of our land, you may find gigantic tracks and trails of infinitely larger worms, yet here also the reptiles are invisible. Those reptiles are called 'Landlaws.'

Like other horrid serpents, Landlaws make you shudder, whilst they fascinate a few. They sneak very stealthily about, seeking what they may devour, giving no note of warning to their unresisting victims. They have insatiable appetites and 'nothing comes amiss.' When once they have thrown their mighty coils around a man, a family, a small or great estate, they strangle the life out in pure wantonness; if they do not swallow their victim at the first, they let it rot or go to ruin and become the carrion for a flock of fighting crows, who batten on the carcase and leave nothing but the bones.

Like all snakes, too, Landlaws slough their old skins occasionally and come out in bright new scales, still containing the old guile, however. They live to extreme old age, and are exceeding hard to kill. 'They are of very ancient lineage, for a few 'came over with William the Conqueror,' and most trace their descent from the Norman nobles of his heirs. The same William sacrificed and exterminated the comparatively harmless kind, which his Saxon slaves had brought up in their simple way amongst themselves. Such is the marvellous vitality of these Norman monsters, that there are still living wiry active Landlaws more than 700 years of age, which ought to have been rooted out and burned centuries ago, when the ancient forests were destroyed and the land became more civilised and settled.

Some of these reptiles have been killed outright; some have been only scotched; most have been actually fed and fattened by our infatuated forefathers, who were afraid to harm them, owing to the silly superstition—which still survives—that our nation would be ruined if Landlaws ever should become extinct.

Why should Englishmen be still surprised at superstitious savages worshipping huge crocodiles, and feeding them with younger sons and feeble daughters and their widowed mothers?

Yonder's the stately funeral procession of the late Lord Vampyre, walking its way slowly from the splendid palace, through the greenwood garden, over the mossy sunlit lawns, and past the gaudy chapel, to the black and silent cavern, walled in with Vampyre skulls and bones.

The last time that vault was opened, was less than two years ago for the lately dead Lord Vampyre's eldest son, 'the Honourable Absangt Adam Day Brassery,' a drunken debauchee, 'who died suddenly from falling accidentally downstairs' in a high house, not of the highest fame however, in the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette at Paris. He was picked up by two sisters of mercy, of exquisite complexions, who bore him to a bed in their room on the '*cinquième étage*,' where they gently removed his watch and chain and heavy gold napoleons and costly rings, perhaps to relieve the pressure on his swollen veins.

During the necessary official and unofficial enquiries, that poor young man's relations very generously distributed two thousand francs amongst the police, those two sisters of mercy, and the press reporters, for the kind interest they

had taken in the noble man, whom the Paris papers called 'Jacques Robinson, an English clerk out of employment.' Of course, the public were not interested in a mere dead clerk, so the relatives sealed up the brainless lordling and exported him to England under a heavy duty. There they put a silver plate over his vile body, recording his honourable name and many virtues, and laid him at last to rest—comforted by the assurance of the prophetic chaplain that he would certainly rise to eternal life—by the side of his mouldy ancestors in yon ghastly charnel-house, to which they are now carrying his father's bones.

Do you see that little bilious blight of an Eton boy following the coffin? That sickly child, who does not show any more signs of emotion than those necessarily incident to the protracted melting of a goodly chunk of 'butter-scotch' in his left cheek, is now 'Viscount Vampyre and Baron Lanmakor.' 'Le Roi est mort; vive le Roi.' The new nobleman is an incorrigibly lazy lord of thirteen, and is only too glad to get an unexpected holiday, but is dreadfully bored by the funeral. He wishes awfully they would walk quicker, for he feels sure that the steel gin which he has just set in the stable-yard must have caught a rat by now, and he wants to run off as soon as he can to save it from getting lame too much, for his newest pup to 'play with.'

His Lordship spent two hours this morning down at his keeper's kennels, smoking cigarettes along with the gooseberry-eyed Clumber spaniels, and he is now disinfecting himself with lumps of toffee, whose nobbly presence in his cheek, he weakly satisfies himself that nobody will notice.

My Lord will be so sick presently, that he will have to bury his face in his sticky handkerchief, and temporarily retire from the funereal function. On Saturday you will be able to read in the local *Gazette and Argus* an extremely bathetic account, edged with gummy, black mourning bands, of how 'The Right Honourable Victor Edward Albert Adam Brassery, Fourth Viscount Vampyre, hysterically sobbed and buried his pale, heart-broken face (*sic*) in his mourning silk handkerchief (supplied by Mr. Tibbings, the well-known undertaker of this town), and rushed away to hide his scalding grief, as all that was mortal of his passionately-loved grandpapa was lowered into the family vault of the noble Vampyres,' &c.

Victor, the new lord, is the youngest child and the only son of the late Absangt, whose promising career was so suddenly cut short before he inherited the title, leaving his cruelly-used wife and four daughters, besides his son, as his only legacy, except his bad name, to his father, who is now being buried.

Those four tall, discontented-looking mourners of 35 or 40, are the four surviving sons of the dead, and uncles of the living, Lord Vampyre. They have three sisters also, but they are not here to-day, for they have all married poor men, and, to tell the truth, grudge the journey money.

The deceased peer was a great land and ground-rent owner, and a grasping, hard, and stingy man as well. As every dignified English nobleman should do, he determined to leave everything he could 'to properly support the title' of his successor. At his death, his rent-roll

amounted to eighty-three thousand pounds a year. His pictures are valued at three-quarters of a million. He had nearly half a million in railway and Government securities besides, and his life was insured for eighty thousand pounds.

The real estate being strictly entailed, of course every acre of it now belongs to the thirteen-year-old grandson.

The proud old peer has also left to his heir all his pictures and other chattels (the Viscountess died some years ago), and every sovereign of his personalty, except the £80,000 of insurance money, which he has generously divided between his four sons, his son's widow, his three daughters, and four granddaughters, in the proportion of ten thousand pounds to each male and five thousand to each female.

When Master Victor attains his majority, eight years hence, he will come into an income of about a hundred and ten thousand pounds a year, owing to the 'long minority,' and to the increase in the value of the house property in town, due to the confiscated investments of simple-minded lessees. All this the fourth Lord Vampyre will have gotten without doing a stroke of work; indeed, his little lordship could not earn a day's bread, even if his valuable little life depended on his doing it. At the same future date, his mother, his sisters, his aunts, and his uncles will be enjoying an *average* annual income, accruing also from the late lord's bounty, of some two hundred and seventy-six pounds, thirteen shillings, and elevenpence each.

Who, after reading this true story, will not be thankful that Englishmen alone, of all 'civilised' nations in the world, possess the inestimable pri-

vilege of a law and custom of 'Primogeniture'? And who is there that will not blame those infatuated French fellows, because, a century ago, they drowned those laws and customs in the life-blood of those who had fattened on them, and smeared the ugly word 'ÉGALITÉ' in the same red syrup on every château throughout their land?

I have omitted to say that such is the brotherly love existing in the Vampyre family, that the eldest uncle would gladly lose an eye if his noble nephew would only be so good as to die next week, and moreover that each of the younger uncles would willingly sacrifice as much also, if, not only that nephew, but also the elder brother or brothers and those brothers' sons, would considerately have a joint funeral within a year or so.

The Funeral is finished. The only bright thing about the last lord is his crest—'a baron burgling, ppr.'—blazoned on a massive silver plate above his festering breast. He is already forgotten by his heir and by all the family, except those very near relations who curse him quietly for his will, which was made, however, exactly as his country's laws encouraged him to make it.

Let us go home through the Park, which contains two thousand acres in a ring-fence nine miles round. Belgium is said to support four hundred people to the square mile; here are three square miles of excellent land, which ought therefore to support twelve hundred souls. But our landlaws will not allow this land to grow bread for human beings; they absolutely forbid the lord of these estates to plough up a single acre of these three square miles of pasture; they forbid him, under very heavy penalties, to grow even

enough wheat thereon to make one loaf of bread : so these two thousand acres must be wasted, as they have been wasted for generations past, by unproductive trees and deer and game.

If this waste of deep rich soil were cultivated as it would be in a country where primogeniture was unknown, it would yield annually, at least, sixteen thousand pounds' worth of food for the people, besides space for many healthy dwellings. In the British Islands there are, at this moment, tens of thousands of *families* which live on less than forty pounds a year, so this park could keep at least four hundred of such families.

You say, I have not given the park credit for the value of those magnificent trees scattered over it in clumps and avenues. Those trees are worthless both to the nominal owner and to the nation. The landlaws prohibit Lord Vampyre and everybody else from cutting down and selling that timber, for this is an 'entailed estate' and therefore subject to the agrarian law, which will neither use the trees itself nor permit anybody else to use them.

When I add that if the owner, aged thirteen, cut down and sold a hundred pounds' worth out of the hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of ripe timber in and near this park, he could be immediately punished by the representatives of *his own unborn son* for a crime called 'waste'—you will say I am 'humbugging' you ; but, indeed, I am not ; that is the wicked truth, and 'waste' is the statutory name of an offence consisting in selling at its market value for the public good a tree, which the landlaws insist shall be wasted utterly by allowing it to rot at home !

No,—all those splendid trees must cumber the ground where they stand, until they decay and are blown down by some storm, perhaps scores of years hence, and then their *débris* will be worth about the cost of hauling it away and of digging out the stumps. Their brown, brittle timber will possibly be used for making fences round future new plantations, with a view to further wicked waste.

Walk quickly, for there are two keepers coming after us out of the 'Fox-earth spinny' yonder.

Now that we are safely through the Lodge gates, let us stroll down to the model village of Stighley.

The last time, the last Lord ever went outside his door, he came by here in his wheel-chair drawn by a shaggy Shetland pony. The sick old man, spying something white on yon hollow oak, sent one of his attendants to see what it was. The servant brought back a damp piece of paper, with the rusty nail that had pinned it to the trunk.

The dying lord trembled slightly, but only for a moment, when his dim eyes at last deciphered what had just been put into his palsied hands; it was 'an humble address' to himself.

This was all that was written in a large, shaky, illiterate-looking hand: 'He Who made thee, Who will kill thee, and Who will cast thee into Hell—Cursed thee thus: 'Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field.' 't is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

The pony was turned back, to enquire at the lodge, but the cripple gate-opener could not tell who stuck the paper up. He and a keeper had seen it at six o'clock that morning, but both, being unable to read, had left it, thinking it was one of the steward's notices. Lord Vampyre then treated the anonymous message with the aristocratic contempt it deserved, muttering testily to himself as he tossed the crumpled fragments on to the carriage drive, but he was drawn slowly back to his room.

He died a few days afterwards. Some say he was 'sensible to the last,' but others, including his lawyer and chaplain, say he wandered in his mind, as proved by his begging to be allowed to alter his will—a request, which, of course, was not granted. The writer of the disagreeable note has not yet been discovered, and probably will never be found out, although a dissenting preacher, who was 'convicted' twenty years ago of 'wiring' hares, is suspected.

There, that's Stighley.

Those pretty 'queen-anne' cottages, standing on the tump end of the Village Green, facing the road, are quite new. They are built on land belonging from time immemorial to the Villagers in common, but the late lord placed them there as a sign that he had annexed that land, and nobody dared say him 'nay.' You see there is already a brand-new fence put up around the Green where there was never a fence before. The ancient, shaggy donkeys, the odd, grey geese that used to hiss when noisy boys played 'rounders' on a Sunday, the two easily contented cows—which used to roam and feed here on the smooth close turf, summer after summer, are all gone now.

The stump of the old Maypole, round which many generations of merry girls and boys have danced, is, I see, actually used in bitter irony as the post on which the Scotch Agent has nailed his notice warning all villagers, and particularly children, not to trespass, under pain of imprisonment, on what is undoubtedly their inalienable land. What wistful eyes those quiet half-fed urchins clambering up the new fence cast on the forbidden ground. They must never play and shout there any more, for the owners of that land are a selfish little boy of thirteen, who will never use it, *and his unborn son.*

The queen-anne cottages, swith their half-timbered gables and red brick diamond panels, cost two hundred pounds apiece to build, yet they let for only four pounds a year. There's charity for you! and a signal example of the advantage of having landlords rich enough to lay out money for the good of the poor and be content with a ridiculously small interest. It may be well to remark, however, that those æsthetic cottages are built there, partly, as we have seen, as a means of stealing the land on which they stand, and partly because they 'look pretty' to the lords and ladies who drive past them on their way, to and from, the lodge. They look so cosy out, let us go into this end one and see how comfortable it is inside. The rheumatic-looking woman says the living-room is so draughty that 'the wind's enough to winner' taters.' It is possible, for it is a five sided shed with nine-inch outside walls of brick in green-elm frames, and the sappy-wood has dried away from the road-drift mortar. There are two doorways to this room, in which are two thin

doors of shrunken deal, which 'show the daylight through the cracks.' Three 'lead windows' glazed with very costly green and yellow translucent, but by no means transparent, glass. (Clear panes would not look pretty from the road, you know.) Further ventilation is secured by a smoky chimney which will not draw unless the door's ajar.

The living-room to this cottage is so large that there is no necessity for another room downstairs; so there is no pantry here, but there is space enough for the bread and lard on each side of the loudly-ticking clock. One knowing look at the unhappy cat will tell you how cold the cottage is. Overhead are the two bedrooms nearly large enough for the father, mother, and four children to sleep in—by keeping pretty close together. The parents dare not have a larger family like other labourers, for the agent has warned them that if they do they will have to quit at quarter-day. The only window in their bedroom is partly covered with a sackcloth curtain lest passers in the road should see in, which might be inconvenient, as the bottom of the window is on the floor and the top is level with the tenant's waist.

'How much garden and allotment has your husband got?' The hungry woman with the sunken cheeks replies, 'Forty lug at fowerpence a lug, 'is lardship don't never'llow no labourer to have more ne'r what we got—a quar'r of a acre—so as the farmurs shan't grumble an' zwur at our wastin' our brawn on too much 'tater groun' of our owun.' So Lord Vampyre has been more liberal than some landowners in allowing a cottager to occupy even a quarter of an acre, at three times the rent paid him by his tenant farmers.

We shan't have time to wait here longer, as I want to take you down the back lane and show you what the main part of Stighley is like.

There—those fifty filthy hovels all belong to the great Lord too, and are really inhabited by human beings—by English men and women. 'More fools they for living there,' say you; 'but what can the poor creatures do to better their unhappy lot?' say I. The agent has warned them every rent day for years past, if they are so stupid as to beg for some repairs, that Lord Vampyre will do nothing for such old places, and that 'if they grumble again he will pull every cottage down and plant a pheasant covert there.'

The labourers have been kept in ignorance and fear and hunger all their wretched lives, and there is nowhere else for them to go to within walking distance of their work and birthplace, which, strangely enough, they still love. Thanks to the landlaws, Lord Vampyre owns every acre for miles round, and his trustees certainly will not build another cottage anywhere on the estate, unless it is absolutely necessary to enable a farmer to get another hand into his power, without which opportunity for oppression he might threaten to throw up his farm. Neither will the trustees sell a bit of land for a 'philanthropist' or a 'building society' to build cottages upon; even if they were so willing, the purchaser of this small portion of an entailed estate would have to pay the law expenses of the transfer, *which would probably exceed the value of the land* which he had bought.

Low fever is always lurking in these dens, and no wonder, for yonder is the only water-supply

—a well eighteen feet deep, which is often dry in summer. That short shed ten yards away from it, with its back to the street, contains latrines common to the village. 'But why don't the sanitary inspector and the doctor insist on proper sanitary arrangements?' Because they both live in Lord Vampyre's houses at easy rents, and the inspector is bribed by a brace of pheasants and a hare at Christmas not to complain about cottages on the estate, and the doctor's best patient is the 'big house,' and the doctor isn't a fool. I may add that the parson is a 'poor relation' of the late Lady Vampyre.

Three years ago, a labourer living in that thatched hovel, there, on your left, after repeated supplication to the steward that his roof might be made water-tight as his wife was very ill, and finding that he could get nothing done for him, at last begged his employer, one of Lord Vampyre's tenant-farmers, to sell, and haul for him, a small waggon-load of straw, that he might cobble up the thatch himself. But the tenant would not, or could not, help him in his trouble, for if he sold—nay, even if he gave away—a waggon-load of straw to be used beyond the boundary of his holding, the landlaws would render him liable to forfeiture of his farm, and to a heavy fine besides. So the cottager, too poor to purchase straw and haul it from the nearest market town, had no alternative but to let his weakly wife become a martyr to chronic rheumatism, until she was happily released at last, like so many of her neighbours, by a fatal seizure of Landlaw complaint.

The church, which you can just see through the trees, is kept very trim and neat, and into it,

every Sunday, every villager must go. The bigoted priest would at once denounce any delinquent to the agent, who would then serve notice on such heretic that he must either go to church or quit his work and cottage. So that parson proudly boasts at 'visitation,' as a proof of his persuasiveness, that he 'hasn't got a dissenter in his parish.' I need hardly add that there is not a dissenting chapel throughout the whole of Lord Vampyre's vast estates.

Pliny—the friend of landlords, and therefore not inclined to find unrighteous fault with them—averred that 'Great estates had ruined Rome.' ('*Latifundia perdidere Italiam.*') Let us take care that no historian can ever write that epitaph for England.

LANDSPOILERS.

THOSE who loathe statistics as much as most people had better shun this chapter, for a slight eruption of infectious figures is very likely to break out upon its latter half.

To-day we have reached a county far away from that infested by the Vampyre family.

That abrupt, odd hillock just in front of us is the only rising ground within a radius of many miles, and hereabouts it's called 'the Devil's Tump.' If the Devil's delight be to view waste and woe, as preach the parsons, who seem to know him well from the confidence with which they tell us his opinions, he could not have chosen a spot from which to view a more delightful panorama.

The proprietor does not seem to be at home to-day, but even if he were, I do not think he would consider me a trespasser, so let us toddle up the tump. There, sit down on the stone stool, which looks as if he occupied it pretty often, and let us look around.

Those miles and miles of crooked, worn-out hedgerows, worthless as fences, forming a tangled net all over that fat plain, are toils woven by the Landlaws. Those hedgerows waste an average width of eight or nine yards each of fertile soil. The sun can't shine upon the strip lying along the north side, and rabbits, caterpillars, and sparrows want a like strip on the south side for themselves. Think, too, of all the thousands of unnecessary turnings, wasting time and tiring men and horses, which must every year be made in those small fields by ploughs and harrows, drills and drags, and cumbrous 'reapers.' Nor must you forget the heavy gates and gate-posts which are kept up—the lord of these lands alone knows why, for there are practicable breaches near them in every hedge,

Look at those straggling, winding, 'occupation lanes,' seamed with crooked cart-ruts, which must give access to every field. They grow nothing but seeding weeds, and hungry worms and insects.

A tenth part of all that fertile plain is wasted by those hedgerows, lanes, uncultivated corners, and desert strips. In other words, enough profitable produce could be grown on the wasted lands in each of those parishes to pay for the education of all its children, and keep all its infirm poor besides.

But the Marquess, who owns every yard from here to the horizon, is too poor himself to re-

place those rotten fences by fewer boundaries made straight and useful. Nor dare he destroy them and cultivate the land now spoiled, for he might then be sued by his successor for thus causing 'Waste.'

This is what is called an 'Absentee Estate.' The 'Most Noble and Puissant Prince' never lives longer on this part of his principality than one month in twelve, and then only to shoot the partridges with which the place abounds in a dry 'wheat year.' Sometimes he never comes at all, save for a day a summer, from September to the second September after. Once he never saw the property for nearly four whole years.

That long, dark patch, yonder in the distance, is Rushmore Park, My Lord's headquarters when he visits this estate. The white speck near one end of it is the stately, classic, white-stone mansion built by the present owner's grandfather, after a great fire had utterly destroyed the dry old manor house. The same lord then planted five hundred acres round the former little park to make it large enough for his mighty house, and then he died, leaving his debts and dry-sucked farms behind him.

The present peer, an easy-going man, has never liked this perfect house. However warmed the huge, high rooms may be, they somehow seem bleak, comfortless and cold. The unclad, snow-white, marble statues, standing on tall pedestals about its halls, with fragile arms and legs propped up with most uncalled-for stumps of trees and cloaks—make you shiver as you pass them. I always blush for these bold creatures that their clothes were stolen while they were bathing, so

that each has therefore only one loose towel to dress in; but as their eyes are all scooped out, perhaps it does not matter much among themselves. Through some of the lower windows, you can look out over a few flat furlongs, along damp avenues, but the house is mostly hemmed in by comparatively youthful trees, planted here and there over the level park, in formal quincunxes. They are mostly limes, which give you an impression that you are a State prisoner guarded by squads of motionless, silent sentries, and you fancy that you will be glad to get away from this dreary grandeur.

This and two other 'places' in two other counties are kept up, at great expense, ready for the rare and uncertain coming of My Lord. Of the three seats, the Marquess prefers Clifcot Court, where he spends most of the time not given up to the London season. Clifcot is a grey and red-stone old 'Court' run wild on the edge of a rugged bluff, looking down on a heron-haunted lake, whose sombre surface reflects the mighty beeches crowning the crags around its other bounds. From its low black-oak rooms, the Court inhabitants can see, far away over the tumbled shadowy woods, a glistering streak of the silver Severn, where the noblest river in England struggles with the steepest tide on earth.

There's a straddle-bug prospecting around your collar and licking his lips for you. He's knocked off now, and making tracks at a three-minute gait for Rushmore.

Now look a little to your left. Do you see that tumble-down old mill and waterwheel about a mile and a-half away, just below where the

stream forks into two glimmering pools—the Pond and Backwater? The Marquess lets that mill for five-and-twenty pounds a year, although he might get fifty if he would repair it. But his lordship is too poor or too proud to do anything for it; so there it stands, a picturesque curse to him and to all the rich valley above it. Those flat, dark, rushy meadows, on each side of the brook above the mill, cover six hundred acres. They are always water-logged, and sheep, and sometimes cows, get ill and die if fed on them. So those six hundred acres are let for six hundred pounds a year to two insolvent tenants. If the Marquess could abolish his mill-pond and his mill, and let the rivulet fall freely, as nature let it fall three hundred years ago, those fields would dry, and half-a-dozen prosperous tenants would gladly pay him thirteen hundred pounds a year, instead of the present six hundred—nearly always in arrear. But this is an ‘entailed estate,’ so the Marquess is merely a limited owner for his life; he must not therefore lose his right to dam up the stream to spoil his own estate, lest his heir should punish him for thus committing ‘Waste.’ Besides, his tory lordship knows that it would be ‘bad form’ to make so great an innovation as to improve away a landmark, which his noble ancestors had handed on to him to keep for his successors. My Lord, moreover, might not see that by losing twenty-five pounds a year, he might increase his income by seven hundred.

And we must not forget that M^lLady, the Marchioness, loves that ‘dear, romantic, old mill’ and its eccentric waterwheel. She has never seen them but twice in her silly life, and will probably

not take the trouble to see them twice more; but her fickle ladyship wouldn't have them destroyed for—no, not even for another daughter, 'they're so delightfully picturesque, you know.' But she doesn't like the miller at all, for on the day that she was 'sketching' the crazy shanty and its creaking wheel, the fat, bluff tenant coming 'betwixt the wind and her nobility,' and touching his floury 'wideawake,' 'made so bould as to ax m'leddy to ax m'lard the Marcus to take away the waterweel an' put a galvernize hiron roof hover the waggon shed an' let him have a steam engine there to turn the stowans instid!' 'The idea!'—screamed the indignant Marchioness at dinner that same evening—'that horrid, brutal, vandal of a millah would woot out my dear—old—murmuring watahwheel, and hoist up one of those dreadful, shining, tin roofs and a noisy engine to covah the lovely valley with clouds of filthy smoke,' and her ladyship groaned in spirit at the utter absence of æsthetic culture in millers in general and in the Marquess's millers in particular.

Turn round and look at the slightly undulating land stretching away to the south. That is what is called 'clay-loam' soil; it is capable of growing enormous crops of wheat and beans if it were only drained. But, as you know already, the owner is a very poor and a very limited owner. He might die to-morrow, and he cannot leave one acre to any one he likes. He has no son—only five uninvited daughters—and so, at his death, all his thousands of mismanaged acres here and in other counties must go to his next brother, whom he hates and who hates him. They have never spoken to each other since the day their father

died, leaving some money to the second son, which the elder thought ought to have come to him 'to keep up the title.' Why, therefore, should the Marquess borrow money to improve his lands, and so enrich a brother whom he loathes, and who is longing every day to hear of his death? No, the present owner means to do as his father did before him; take whatever rents will come to him while he lives, without annoying nature by improvements,—die, and let his heir repair the decayed farmhouses, barns and buildings at as little cost as possible, just enough to last somehow during the reign of another marquess, and so *ad infinitum*.

Indeed, the Marquess's motto—'I scorn to toyl or spinne'—displayed on a stiff stone ribbon round his crest (a sloth chewing a lily) on the archway over the lodge-gate, is not so inappropriate to his character as some mottoes are to some lords' lives.

'But how came the ignoble owner to be so poor, as you say he is, with all those estates?' Well, he didn't inherit his title until he was forty-seven, for thirty of which years he was much annoyed with his father for not dying. That father was, from the beginning, burdened with the building grandfather's debts, and lived up to his income, hunting the country with his own hounds, and keeping up all four of his establishments with gross extravagance. When he died—being disgusted with his elder son, the present peer, because he had no son, and 'raced' and drank—he left all the personalty he could scrape together to his younger sons, who were steadier, being poorer. When the present holder of the title found that his father 'lived much too long,'

and was not willing to be ruined by him, he became the easy prey of certain Jewish bill-discounters, whose representatives are now the real life-holders of the estates, for they send down twice a year to carry off their first share of the rents to London, leaving the Marquess any balance remaining over. It is due to these Hebrew receivers, to say, that they take particular care of their noble debtor's health; indeed, they go so far as to heavily insure his life for him: perhaps the knowledge that at his death they must instantly take their beaks and talons out of the estates, may have something to do with their unnatural solicitude.

The tenants, who farm the lands all round us in lots of five or six hundred acres each, might 'manage to live and thrive' and yet pay higher rents than they do now, if it were not for the land-laws I have mentioned, and for yet other land-laws, large and little, which hamper and annoy them. For instance, from that railway station, which you see over there, where the little white clouds of steam are melting into thin air—to London is only two hours' journey. The farmers could easily, and would gladly, send potatoes, hay, straw, and other produce up to town, and sell them at good profits, buying back cattle foods and fertilisers for their sick farms instead. But they must neither sell potatoes, hay, nor straw, nor anything that is green, or they will be at once ejected and have to pay gross sums for damages besides.

Do you see those single trees dotted all along the hedgerows, making gaps in the farmers' fences, poisoning the crops below, and being nourished

by the soil for which the tenants pay rent? Now, if one of those tenants cut down one of the smallest of those trees, in order to repair a gate or mend a plough, he would immediately receive notice to quit his farm, and would be expelled with a character so odious, that no other landowner would dare to take him as a tenant on an entailed estate again.

‘But why, and how, do people ‘entail’ their estates, if it is such a nuisance?’—you ask. Well, it is difficult to explain, but I will tell you as shortly as possible, something about the way in which it is generally done.

By the Landlaws—‘a man may settle his land upon any number of lives in being *and for twenty-one years afterwards*’—and by far the larger part of the land in Great Britain is thus settled.

We will suppose an owner—Sir Benjamin—of an entailed estate. Sir Benjamin’s father, Sir Arthur, died thirty years ago, leaving the estate entailed on Sir Benjamin and on Sir Benjamin’s heir, who was not then born. Sir Benjamin’s eldest son, Charles, came of age last week. Now, by the law, the dead Sir Arthur could not settle the land on anybody unborn for more than twenty-one years, so that Master Charlie is now free to dispose of his reversionary interest or to ‘bar the entail’ as it is called. But Master Charlie is already fond of racing, and has not a shilling but what his father chooses to give him; nor is he entitled to a shilling out of the estate until his father’s death, which might not happen for thirty or forty years yet. Now that father, Sir Benjamin, knowing that he himself might die any day, and

that then Charlie would probably gamble away the estate, is very anxious that the estate should be resettled or 'entailed' on Charlie's younger brothers and their sons, in case Charlie should die without issue. So Sir Benjamin offers to allow Charlie the money he sorely needs at once—say, three thousand a year, for as long as he, Sir Benjamin, shall live, on condition that Charlie immediately re-entails the estate as Sir Benjamin wishes.

Charlie says he doesn't 'care a little damn' about the future, or about the estate, or anything else, so long as he can get some ready cash; so he readily signs the unintelligible deed put before him by his father.

There; he has just signed it, and by that stroke of the pen he has signed away the freehold of his inheritance, and has resettled the estate upon his possible sons, and, failing them, upon his brothers and their sons 'in tail male'; so that he has re-entailed or 'tied up' the estate for probably fifty years, and possibly for eighty or even ninety years hence! It is quite possible, too, that Charles has agreed, by that same deed, to burden the estate with his father's debts, so that, when he comes to own it himself, he will always be so hampered by these incumbrances that he will never be able to make any improvements on it, and it thus stands a good chance of being robbed and ruined utterly some day. Infamous bargains of this kind are made every day in England—bargains by which a proud old father compels his son, who is too young and inexperienced to know what he is doing, to perpetuate the pride and wealth (or poverty) of the family.

I am sure you must be getting very tired of

the English landlaws. I have shown you samples of a few; there are many others quite as iniquitous.

I will venture, however, to point out some of the national evils born of these laws.

The most obvious and powerful offspring is the House of Lords, for, most assuredly, without the laws and customs of primogeniture and entail, there could be no hereditary caste so wealthy as to know nothing of the ordinary means by which the multitude gain their bread—a caste which, consequently, in no way represents that multitude, whose laws it mars, mutilates, or rejects with the supremest impertinence.

OUR FIVE HUNDRED HEREDITARY LAWGIVERS OWN ONE-FIFTH OF THE WHOLE LAND OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND INFLUENCE ONE-THIRD OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Is it extraordinary then, that the Land-laws are hard to kill? But die they must, and if they are not reformed away by gentle means in time, they will be wiped out in a hurry with a bloody sponge some day, if ever the people of England get hungry during a blockade.

ONE LORD OWNS ONE MILLION THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND ACRES IN GREAT BRITAIN, OR ONE FORTY-FOURTH PART OF ITS ENTIRE AREA.

Two thousand three hundred persons own one-half of the enclosed land of England and Wales.

There are thirty-seven million people in the United Kingdom, and seven thousand persons probably own four-fifths of its area.

One hundred and fifty thousand landowners properly so-called, *i.e.*, owners of *one acre and*

upwards, own the land of England and Wales, in other words, only one Englishman in 170 owns land.

The heir to an entailed estate, knowing that nothing can prevent his ultimately having his father's land, takes no thought for the morrow; he will never have to earn a shilling, and so he generally leads a life which, most assuredly, his Maker never intended any reasoning creature to live.

'Absenteeism' was the beginning of the late Irish land troubles. The Landlords did not live—and many of them were never seen—on their estates. Every shilling that they could screw out of their helpless tenants by rack-renting them, they spent abroad in England, or on the Continent. They had naturally no sympathy with men they did not even know by sight, and they had no interest in improving farms which they would be unable to recognise without a guide.

Absenteeism is the natural child of Primogeniture, and will beggar the great estate whose produce it spends elsewhere, as another natural child sometimes impoverishes the person who supports it. Most of the 'Territorial Aristocrats' have more than one place in the country, besides a London house. Many of them have lands in more than half-a-dozen counties. For instance, 28 dukes own 158 separate estates within the United Kingdom, and the *five hundred peers* are returned in the new Domesday Book as *owning fifteen hundred different estates*, exclusive of London houses. These owners are not Irish birds and so cannot be in two or more

places at once. Not a few English landowners have never seen many of their farms. Agents are generally left absolute master of 'absentee' estates, and they, frequently, grossly abuse their power.

How can our 'dog-in-the-manger' land system be peaceably reformed? Many men advocate the French law of compulsory division of a dead man's estate between his children; but that plan would not suit Great Britain, for, besides other objections, Englishmen would never tolerate a law which prevented a man leaving what he had earned to anyone he liked.

Personally, I believe the evils of reforming the laws of settlement and entail would far exceed the evils of abolishing them altogether, and having henceforth no more limited ownerships—only absolute ownership of land in fee simple.

The present wicked law of intestacy, by which the land of a man, who dies without a will, goes *entirely to his eldest son*, must be swept away. It is a hideous sin that the State should step in, over a dead man's body, and rob the widow and the helpless children to enrich one boy, the most able of all to help himself.

There should be a largely increased succession duty, payable by the Receiver of any amount, exceeding, say, two thousand pounds, and this duty should be cumulative, not only in the indirect interest of the relatives, but in the direct interest of the Nation, which should be proportionately paid for the security it guarantees, by its civil and military means, that the specified receiver shall duly receive that which is given to him.

Every transfer of land, by will or otherwise, should be clearly and publicly registered; no transfer being valid unless so registered. The deed of alienation will thus be simplified and its cost reduced, and so, real 'free trade in land' be brought about. Our present Government should blush to recollect that a thousand years ago their Saxon predecessors, whom we sometimes think were savages, registered with scrupulous exactness in their 'shire-motes' or county courts, the limits of the 'folc's,' or people's, and of private owners' lands, and their title-deeds and mortgages.

There must be some simple means of enfranchising land from Tithes, 'Quit-rents,' and other similar, irregular incumbrances.

There should be some limitation to the present power of unlimited mortgaging.

If we 'reformed' the Landlaws as I have suggested, we should indirectly break down forthwith the present curse of land monopoly, and we should gain those priceless national blessings: Free Land, Yeomen, and Increased Produce.

It is generally said that there are but three interests in English land: the Landlord's, the Tenant's, and the Labourer's; but I say there's a fourth, a higher one than all, the interest of the Nation, for whom the other three are Trustees merely, during good behaviour.

Two of our Trustees are fraudulent or incapable, and must be dismissed or closely supervised.

Why should not the duties of the three Trustees be done by one Trustee?

TENANT-FARMERS.

Robert the Devil begat the Norman Robbers, the Norman Robbers begat the Landlaws, the Landlaws begat the Great Estates and the Landless Labourers, and the Great Estates drove out the Yeomen who had tilled their own land, and begat Absentee Landlords and Tenant-Farmers and Deserted Villages and Paupers.

Thus the Devil is the direct origin of our land system, as well as of our kings and some other things of which Englishmen are so proud. We are too prone to forget our Nation's Norman benefactor. We should give the Devil his due: Why not supersede 'St. George for Merrie England?'

As British Landlaws infest no other land, it follows that the Tenant-farmer is indigenous to our favoured isle. Irish farmers do not now exist on sufferance and are not tenants in our English sense, so let us leave them to take care of themselves, which, luckily, they are quite capable of doing.

Tenant-farmers are found scattered over the whole face of Great Britain, but they are more numerous in some localities than in others, being generally more abundant on the richer low-lands than on the lean hill districts. Some naturalists have described them as gregarious—gathering in flocks, but I am inclined to think that large occupiers are not naturally herding animals, although of late years 'bad times' have induced them to band themselves together for mutual

protection against their natural enemies, the Landlords. Up till lately, these latter—the lions of our land—armed with the club of land monopoly, and preserved as privileged marauders by written and unwritten laws like hares and foxes, have continually harried and preyed upon the timid tenants of the plain.

A temporary 'close time' has now come on, however, during which the prey, at last at bay, and getting scarce, are not pursued as formerly; the 'leary' lions don't forget that they and their families would be known no more, if the creatures upon whom they live became extinct.

Whether gregarious or not, farmers are certainly not nomadic; on the contrary, they are remarkable for a cockroach-like attachment to the hearths and homes where they were hatched. They have usually chained themselves to the rack-rented rocks whereon their fathers died, and have thus become, Prometheus-like, the feeble prey of the first vultures which chose to pounce upon them. They have lacked the pluck and enterprise to flee away and find a nest where they may be at rest, or free to fight on fair terms with their natural foes.

Collectively, Tenant-farmers have possessed—and will continue to possess until the *real* enfranchisement of their serfs—immense political power. With the most incredible crassness, however, they have refused to recognise their potential influence, but have always acted as the blind supporters through thick and thin of their natural enemies, who have duped them again and again with the most shameless hypocrisy—a hypocrisy which should have been perfectly palpable to any

but the very densest beings. At the outbreak of the first French Revolution, the English Landlords frightened their peace-loving, timid tenants out of the leases, which had before been customary, by false prophecies of an impending outbreak of the Proletariat at home against the food-producing Capitalists, and by the specious argument that, as prices were fluctuating to a frightful extent, it would certainly be against the interests of their tenants, whose capital was limited, to be entangled in leases, which could not be cast aside for many years, perhaps, if found disadvantageous.

Thenceforward until a year ago, tenancies on sufferance—with ejectment without compensation after six months' notice to quit—became the rule.

Having thus got the tenants entirely into their hands, the Lords and Landlords made and kept up a monstrous war for nearly a generation afterwards.

That war enormously increased the comparative wealth and power of the territorial aristocracy. Rents rose 'by leaps and bounds,' year after year, as the 'glory' of England grew, and bread was bought at over four times its present price.

High pay, wrung from the starving multitude at home by vicious taxes, and 'honours,' which cost the crazy king nothing, kept the unendowed 'younger sons' contented abroad, in the army and navy—'fighting for their country'—forsooth.

There was, of course, only open voting at Parliamentary elections in those glorious days. At a county contest, lords and landlords drove

their flocks of 'sheep' to the hustings to vote and bleat as they were bidden—sometimes for some beardless baby, whom they had never seen before, and had heard of only as the 'hare to Lard' somebody. Such often was the 'fit and proper person' chosen to play 'Knight of the Shire' and protector of the people's interests in Parliament.

I should, perhaps, remind you that the voter's qualification in the counties before the first Reform Bill, was the possession of a Freehold let for Forty shillings a year. A very modest real estate would thus confer a vote, but as the great landlords monopolised the land, an outsider could hardly qualify himself without their leave. That leave was given readily, but on one condition—that the buyer of the cottage voted as the vendor willed. Payment of rent, however large, would not make a farmer an elector, so an ambitious squire would frequently compel a tenant to conspire with him—by buying one of the hovels kept on hand on the estate—to create the necessary 'Forty shilling Freeholder.'

By law, nobody could become a county candidate *unless his revenue from real estate exceeded £600 a year*, except, indeed, a *peer's son*, who was exempt from this qualification; and as the cost of treating during the *fortnight's* poll was then immense, only a lordling or a wealthy landowner could be a county member.

Any refractory or uncertain tenant, and all widows were, of course, ejected from their farms, and worried out of their little freeholds, and sometimes ruined, being merely entitled to six months' notice to turn out without indemnity, in lieu of

the leases out of which they had been beguiled by false pretences a few years before.

After a general election was over, and there was a probability of no more votes being wanted for some seven years, rents were often raised all round to provide ways and means for the borough-mongers, to enable them to buy more 'free and independent burgesses' at the next election, and thus ensure for themselves an hereditary peerage, at the rate of one barony for every half-a-dozen members paid for and sent up to be the tools of a knavish Government. There was no need to 'nurse' constituencies through long years in the good old times; then they were all 'drove,' now they must be 'humoured, not drove.'

Lords and landlords, placed in power by their tenants and their purchased burgesses, ruled the country absolutely. There was no fear of their many-headed despotism being tempered by assassination, for, by pressgangs, bribes, and want of bread, they had driven all the young men abroad, who might have been troublesome at home. Leaving the weak, the old men, the women, and the little ones to famish in their fatherland in helpless quiet, the sons of England were sent out to fight and die in a foreign land by the selfish courtiers of the crazy German king, that they might avenge the killing of a Bourbon tyrant by his starving people. Thus, Britons, boasting that they *never* would be slaves, fought, that Frenchmen might be free as they.

The landowning abettors of the 'Farmer George'—who had squandered a hundred and fifty millions of his people's money in a hopeless attempt to crush American liberty—were not even

at a loss for ways and means to carry on the French war, after they had squeezed every shilling that they dared out of our feeble forefathers. They deliberately conspired to tax posterity. There was no honest opposition to goad the people into seeing that they and their unborn children were being made the helpless victims of a monstrous 'confidence trick,'—of a gigantic job. So the landlords' parliament forthwith fleeced the future nation of *six hundred million pounds*, by adding that sum to the National Debt in *four-and-twenty years*.

Besides the perpetual annuity for interest thus charged upon the earnings of Britons then unborn, the fathers of the present landlords visited their own sins upon other people's children unto the third and fourth generation, insomuch that every several boy or girl baby born amongst us in this year of grace, 1884, is burdened at its birth with a debt of some twenty pounds, of which it is entirely innocent.

Such was the sublime love of the landed interest for the working population of their country in the old war time, that a common toast at rent audit dinners was 'a wet harvest and a bloody war'—a prayer, which, fulfilled, would ensure the keeping up and raising of the already almost prohibitive price of bread.

Since that date, and during the last seventy years, the Landowners and Farmers have thrice brought the country to the brink of revolution; first, at the imposition of the increased Corn duties, then at the rejection of the first Reform Bill, and again before the Corn Laws could be swept away.

In our own day,—although there is no bullying, because there is secret voting—farmers persist in sending to Parliament as their representatives, great landowners or their sons, vacuous youths of twenty-one, lordlings ‘of linked sweetness long drawn out,’ and warranted absolutely free from experience and brains and other dangerous impurities. Landlords are never tired of telling their tenants that they are ‘both in the same boat,’ but no farmer now seems sharp enough to reply as one did in 1845, ‘Yes M’ Lard, but we pulls in hopposite directions.’ A veritable tenant-farmer candidate has no chance of being elected by his brother tenants, for they dearly love a lord; and yet these chartered grumblers growl that the laws made for them by those whose interests are diametrically opposite to their own, are not just as they would have them! When the buttercups called in the pretty cow to protect them from the wet black cloud, she sheltered her electors by wrapping herself around them: ‘which things are an allegory.’

Until the present agricultural depression proved that landlords sometimes consider their consciences next in importance to their pockets, the majority of agents in the midland and southern counties were forbidden to accept dissenting tenants; but just now, when any applicant for a vacant holding is a luxury, one does not hear of nonconformist farmers being refused.

The typical Tenant-farmer is generally supposed to be a plump, free-living, red-faced, fox-hunting, grumbling, king-worshipping, lord-loving, church-going, artless, honest Bucolic. He may have been ‘all or any’ of that much-endowed

creature—once; but ten years of hard times have hardened the latter-day farmer's heart, and he is a sadder and a wiser man.

He is generally the son of another farmer, past or present. During the first four years of his life, he is filled up with more food than any other civilised infant on the face of the earth. The more he resembles a plump, ready-dressed 'suckling-pig,' the more beautiful is he in the eyes of all the farmhouse females in the 'naybrood.' Somehow the fresh air and healthy blood seem to prevent evil consequences from following the excessive fatness.

From four to twelve years old, the embryo farmer sleeps and generally feeds in the farmhouse, plays in the field and yard when fine and in the barn when wet, and goes to school in the stable. The innate fondness of every British country boy for horses is fostered by the father in the willing child. In the long, low stable, hot with the hairy-legged cart-horses and noisy with the smock-frocked ploughboys, the youth picks up a small but vigorous vocabulary of the broadest Saxon-English, and a pungent ammoniacal aroma with which he forcibly assures his mother and sisters on returning to the 'parlour' in the evening, that he has been very attentive at school that day. He soon becomes initiated into the mysteries of riding Captain barebacked, leapfrog, tip-cat, rounders, jumping ancient hurdles, throwing pebbles over the tall Scotch firs, climbing the rookery elms, hunting the tom-cats of the village, getting a 'black eye,' and punching the ploughboys' heads.

From twelve to fourteen, or even until

fifteen, the boy becomes a 'weekly boarder' at Mr. Elphinstone - Weevill's 'Agricultural and Commercial Academy for Young Gentlemen, Minerva House, Sowmartham, under the distinguished patronage of the nobility, clergy, and gentry of the neighbourhood. Visitor: The Rev. Rufus Pimpulnell, Chaplain to Sir Thomas Thoper.' (Mr. Weevill, having tried most genteel pursuits, and having, 'through no fault of his own,' failed in them all, finally became, of course, 'a country commercial schoolmaster,' an M.R.C.T. and N.A.V.E., and he now makes a living.) Here the boy gains a dismal idea of what the prospectus calls 'theology'; a thorough acquaintance with Mumps, Measles, Chicken-pox, and other ancient authors; and a really superb knowledge of very slow text-hand, of tables ('two pints, one quart,' &c.), of very vulgar fractions, and of 'compoun' arifmetic.' He learns enough Latin to be able to conjugate 'Amo' through, regardless of quantities, and, like some other modest school-children I have heard of, 'knows how to speak French,' from being able to jingle through the verb 'Havwor,' which Mr. Weevill assures him, by a cuff on the ear, means to 'ave; and then Master John's education is complete, and he 'leaves school for good'—or bad.

You will observe that, like the young lord, the young farmer has a long special education under certificated agricultural experts, which thoroughly fits him to take care of the land to be entrusted to him some day—a 'science and art,' which some new-fashioned people think requires more careful and varied teaching, than any other at present practised largely by our countrymen.

The hulking, waddling boy now dons the regulation farmer-youth's apparel. For weekdays, a lop-eared bowler hat with three little partridge feathers in the ribbon; a grotesque 'pepper-and-salt' tail-coat, with the back waist buttons abutting on the bases of his bladebones, and the ample skirts monopolised by two towel-like red, white, and lilac pocket-handkerchiefs; brown breeches; gaiters with a button off each side, and enormous hobnailed boots like furniture-removing vans. On nearing him, you are strongly inclined to suppose that he spends his life smoking village 'bird's-eye' in the stable.

For Sundays, flower-shows, weddings, funerals, and other fête days, the sunburned youth blossoms in a somewhat antiquated high silk hat or brand new bowler (to descend to second-best next year); a limp, skim-milk-coloured shirt with large, useful, much-cut mother-of-pearl buttons; a 'superfine black diagonal suit with trousers to match' (for which sorry combination, as thus described in the bill, the Sowmartham tailor has the usury to charge £1. 18s. 6d.), and a very lengthy pair of elastic-sided boots, which make up for their lack of brilliancy by profusely ornamented toe-caps, and a most genteel, excruciating, yet intermittent squeak. The collar of the superfine coat appears to suffer from an insuperable antipathy to the gorgeous yellow and green check necktie, from which it gapes to the extent of three inches at the back of the neck. The body of the coat seems to have been designed with a view to the future development of some abnormal growth at the 'small' of the wearer's back, for there is ample room to conceal a thin cheese in the cavern between the

waistcoat and the coat at that spot. The tails of the latter habiliment droop sadly a little to one side, and considerably flop time to the farmer's somewhat wobbly strides. The trousers are not quite such a success, although they fit as comfortably as some hailing from another equally celebrated tailor in Savile Row; they will persist in shrugging up above the tops of the tag-finished boots, thus displaying at the climax of each step two wide bangles of milk-white sock; and the knees seem anxious to kneel down too impatiently.

'Mister John,' as he is now called, has his hair cut every other Saturday, apparently by his short-sighted mother with a knife and fork. On every Sunday morning, he himself greases the remaining stumps with a large lump of the inexpensive spikenard bought originally for the less ambitious purpose of anointing his father's wagon-wheels. The adorable youth shaves most of his upper lip once or twice a week, leaving an uneven crop of greenish-yellow whiskers to run wild round the rest of his peaceful countenance.

At 18 the young man 'comes out,' he is promoted into going to market, where he is duly presented to the unctuous bagmen, corn-buyers from the county town, and he is now eligible to go a-courting. At 25 he gets married to a farmer's daughter from the next parish, to whom he has been engaged five years; takes a farm at any price the mighty agent chooses to impose upon him, and 'settles down.' He vegetates, like one of his own cow-cabbages, on that farm till his death or bankruptcy. He has seven children. He goes to market and to church once or twice a

week, to the county cattle-show every summer, and to Smithfield once in five years. He pays his rent twice a year, and after the usual growl and wrangle at the rent-table with the agent, he dines at the audit dinner; talks nothing but 'farm' to his neighbour there; drinks just enough to dull the knowledge that he has overdrawn his account at the bank; goes sonorously to sleep; is put into his gig; is taken home quite safely by his knowing cob, and wakes next morning at six o'clock, his usual hour for getting up and grunting to the carter.

He feeds and drinks well at all his meals, of which he has five a day, and goes to bed by ten o'clock after a glass of gin 'ot. He gets on fairly well with his wife; he obeys the ten commandments in letter if not always in spirit; he reads nothing but the column of market jargon, the book of common prayer, the county child-murder, and the nasty details of Farmer Booser's suicide in the tallet; votes for the Tory member as he is told, bows to the Squire, scrapes to the Squiress, and bullies his labourers. He looks 'big,' strong, and is never ill, until some sudden sickness seizes him at sixty-six; then he is 'very bad' for ten days, is missed at market, dies, and is planted in the mossy churchyard, next the last tenant of his farm who was buried there forty years before, near the old yew-tree on the sunny side.

Thus, lived and died the Tenant-farmer in easy times; but the last ten years have made many changes in his relations with his land, with his landlord, with his neighbour, and with himself. Let us put a probe here and there into these changes.

FARMERS IN MISFORTUNE.

Once it was:—Man to the plough,
 Wife to the cow,
 Girl to the sow,
 Boy to the mow,
 And the rent was netted.

Now it is:—Gent—‘Tallyho,’
 Miss—‘Piano,’
 Ma’am—Silk and satin,
 Son—Greek and Latin,
 And all are Gazetted.’

I BABBLED this pastoral ditty to a very old miser, who had hoarded up many millions, and possessed besides immense estates scattered over ten English counties. He was whining, and his half-cooked eyes were watering, on his deathbed, partly because a few of his ruined tenants were a little in arrear, and partly, I believe, because he had not, and never would have now, a legitimate grandchild on whom to entail his fabulous wealth. He had never heard the baby ballad before, and he bade me warble it again, so I twittered it a second time.

So pleased was the peevish old pawnbroker, that the parchment of his cheap-tambourine countenance split into centrifugal fissures radiating from the dewy knuckle-point in the centre towards the rim, which gentle, ghoul-like expression I understood to be indicative of such bliss as a miser only can experience. Then he gurgled a peerish pun forthwith, to the abridged

effect that he wished his tenants would use a little more *guano* and a little less *piano*; at which wit, I was, of course, convulsed with laughter, as a tramp should always be at a rich man's joke. '*Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator,*' whatever that may mean.

The unpersecuted Shylock possessed exceptional means for forming an opinion on the agricultural distress, and he assured me that I had hit off its origin exactly in my little madrigal. Now many other mighty landowners, and especially their wives, are also quite convinced that extravagance is the cause of the farmer's present troubles. With all due respect to their gigantic intellects, however, I venture to say that they are not entirely right.

I need hardly add that I didn't contradict the millionaire miser's opinion, for I hoped that he might give me sixpence or a pot of porter if I made myself agreeable. I don't mind telling you now—although I wouldn't have let you laugh at me, by telling you at the time of my disappointment—that he never tipped me so much as a copper! But I still believe that had he been *then* assured by a hangman that three half crowns down would save my neck, he would, after calculating risk and interest, have generously ordered one of his many nurses to lend me seven shillings on my I.O.U. and the hangman's receipt for the whole. I wonder whether he would give me a hundred thousand pounds for a soda-water bottle full of cold water now?

There is really no more reason why a farmer, who has invested six or seven thousand pounds in his farm, should not 'tally-ho' sometimes, than

there is why his parish parson, who possesses a similar capital, should not hunt, if he has nothing worse to do. It is perhaps the only amusement, fitted for these two noble minds, that they can get at home. So also, if the farmer's wife shows her cultured taste by sporting a magenta satin frock in church, the landlord, who worshipped with her, would not be justified in ejecting her husband from his farm on the ground that he will, therefore, soon be bankrupt.

Likewise 'Miss,' whose face might not prove to be a fortune unless accompanied, has a perfect right to make herself metal more attractive (as she thinks) by knowing how to squash 'The last rose of summer' on the piano, (provided I am not a 'mud'—a farm student, with a room over that piano); indeed, her accomplishments might be of indirect pecuniary value to her father, rather than an extravagance, for they would surely inveigle some amorous swain into relieving him of the cost of her 'keep.' Incidentally I may mention, that I possess a country concert programme, in which—for the delectation of three-shilling seats, reserved, and sundry six-penny people at the back—a great lady's cook and footman's wife have intimated that they have consented to perform under my Lady's patronage. Six weeks before that concert, that haughty Dame warmly importuned her husband to refuse a reduction of rent to a five-hundred-acre tenant, because 'she had heard that his daughter wasted her time playing the piano': which crime, I must confess, that daughter was really guilty of—after she had done the daily dairy work. Strangely enough, My Lady was not all indignant that her

noble brother, who played all day and could not spell a letter through correctly, got fifteen hundred a year as 'something in the Government, you know.' But, 'to return to our muttons' and my ditty,—I look upon the son's learning a little Latin as possibly a good investment, for he might be able to read more sensible agricultural advice out of Virgil's Georgics, than either he or his father could get out of any English school-book.

No, the chief evil is not in these so-called extravagances of modern farmers ; it is in the Landlaws, which have made estates too large to be occupied by their owners, and farms too big for the capitalists and working husbandmen available.

There are at least ten times as many trained young farmers with a thousand pounds apiece, as there are with five thousand each, ready to lay out in stocking farms.

Now of all mistakes that a farmer can make, whether he farm much or little, the worst is to start with insufficient capital. An average English farm requires twelve pounds an acre to work it *properly* ; and the worse the 'times,' the more capital it will want ; yet the average capital invested at this moment by tenant-farmers throughout the kingdom probably does not amount to four pounds per acre !

A tenant of an ordinary-sized farm of five hundred acres could not make any appreciable difference in his annual revenue by working with his own hands ; he might almost as well be hunting whilst his wife made calls in satin. Mind, I am not disparaging the incalculable value of his

presence and supervision; I am merely estimating the amount by which his profits would be increased by his own actual handiwork. But the tenant, and to a greater extent still, the owner, of a hundred-acre farm, might, with the help of his family, do more than half the work to be done on his land, and yet exercise the necessary supervision over the rest. So also the owner of a forty or fifty-acre farm might dispense entirely with extraneous labour. You can find plenty of proofs of this, in the Channel Islands, Belgium, Saxony, France, and Holland. 'But the small farmer could not afford to have machinery,'—you say; why not? Why not introduce co-operation in providing the more costly machines and implements, required for only a few days a year by each co-operator?

Under our present system, three separate profits must be made out of each farm: the Landlord's, the Tenant's, and the Labourer's. Abolish one profit and it naturally follows that each of the others can be increased fifty per cent. Abolish two profits and it as naturally follows that the remaining profit of the lucky man, who in this case would own and work his land himself, can be three times his average share in the first case, exclusive of the probable additional profit due to the increased exertion naturally made by a man knowing that the whole product of his labour will be his own.

English farms, except perhaps on bleak hills, are at present much too large.

But I do not believe in peasant proprietor-

ship in England, except under special conditions. In the first place, the peasant should not depend *solely* on the product of his plot of land. He would find it 'a good stick but a bad crutch,'—profitable if added to the wages earned for labour elsewhere, but entailing much anxiety and possibly failure if he leaned upon it entirely. Moreover his land must be *really good* in quality, and within easy reach of an open market. I will only mention one more out of several other 'conditions' which occur to me:—to prevent the peasant becoming the prey of professional money-lenders, some simple provisions would be necessary; perhaps the power of mortgaging should be limited, and 'land-banks' might be established.

English farmers have the finest market in the world at their own doors, and yet they permit foreigners to pay long carriage and supply it, not only with corn and meat, but with poultry, butter, cheese, eggs, fruit, vegetables, jam, honey, and other perishable products. Taxes are much higher in France than in England, yet Frenchmen can sell butter, poultry, &c., in London at a profit. Why should hens lay more eggs on one side of the Channel than on the other? Let them start and 'bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets,'—say I, if there isn't room enough in the fields. Whilst the cackling was coming off, we could pen up the omnibuses and steam-rollers.

Ask any farmer you meet, and he will tell you with a sigh that 'the low price o' wheat is ruination to the country.' Then give him your opinion that 'cheap bread is, on the contrary,

not only a great national blessing, but it should also be a benefit to him as enabling more of the town artisans' money to be spent in eggs, milk, butter, vegetables, fruit, &c., which your friend ought to be able to supply and sell to him, and also because it enables more children to be born to create a future demand for his farm produce'; and then that farmer may be an ignorant idiot and, if he is larger than you, may call you a 'blasted fool.' This difference of opinion would seem to argue that one or other of you should have a spell at political economy, and that both should go through a course of 'manners,' which dame-school extra, by the way, my mother never afforded for me, as you, genteel reader, will have already rightly opined.

Farming being a 'profession' which requires a longer and more varied training than any other practised largely in England, has, for some inscrutable reason, never yet been taught there. The embryo farmer must learn, not only how to farm, but also how to sell and buy without unnecessary middlemen; and especially must he be taught how to buy his raw material—how to hire his land, in other words, how to deal with his landlord. At present he is, or, at least, until very lately he was, the simple dupe of the agent, who is paid by a percentage on the rents received, and is therefore paid a premium for rack-renting any unlucky tenant who may fall into his clutches.

Away with all monstrous 'cropping' restrictions at once and for ever! Let landlords get the best tenants they can, and then let all those tenants grow and sell all the corn, vege-

tables, straw, hay, milk, roots, seeds, and anything else the farms will produce and can spare. Draw the line only at ploughing up fine old pastures. If every tenant were allowed to grow and sell whatever he liked, the universal competition and the 'higgling of the market' would soon put their trade on a sound and sober basis. Landowners and farmers all over the kingdom are now laying down land wholesale to permanent pasture—'to save the expense of labour,' forsooth; that is a national sin, and about as sensible as 'restricting the output' by mine-owners, to keep up the price of coal and iron. Although I am aware that there will be more dairy work done in England in the future than has been done aforetime, I am also aware that there is more food produced by a well-farmed acre of arable land than by an acre of permanent pasture.

Can any one tell me why 'large farmers' go to market once, twice, or three times every week? It certainly cannot be to sell produce and buy materials, for all that business could easily be done by a smart man in an hour once a month. No; Farmer Couchmass goes off to the two or three largest markets near him every week, he persuades himself and wife, for 'business,' but it is really to idle, chat, and drink about, whilst his son and labourers idle, chat, and slink about at home. Every time a farmer gets up in his gig, drives over to the market-town four miles away, and stays there four hours, he directly and indirectly loses from five to twenty shillings, according to the size of his farm. He should reckon the loss of labour in his absence, the

waste of horse's time, and interest and depreciation on cost of horse, trap, harness, his own clothes, &c., in addition to the actual expenditure on unnecessary drink and tobacco and barmaid and hostler. Whilst he is away, his son of seventeen, who has grown up with the labourers on the farm, knows much less about the work than they do, and has about as much control over them as the Master of the Horse has over the rest of the Cabinet.

There has never been any rational resettlement of rents since the abolition of the landlords' protection duties, nearly forty years ago. The present distress shows that there is something radically wrong with the whole system of land tenure. If we cannot get any larger reform of the land laws, we must at least have a 'fresh deal all round' in the matter of rents; mind you, *certainly re-arranging, not necessarily wholesale reduction*. If certain English land under our present laws is worth thirty shillings an acre, it should be let at thirty shillings an acre, and not at twenty, as some such land is let at now; if it is worth ten shillings, it should fetch ten shillings, and not fifteen, as some such land does now. Why should farmers be the only Englishmen who cannot make a good bargain? Every tenant says he pays too much rent for his land. If this be true, whose fault is it but his own? He can buy or sell a cow or a flock of sheep at a fair price, but when he comes to the infinitely more important matter of buying the use of the landlord's land, he loses his head, and gives 'what the last tenant gave,' or whatever the crafty agent (who frequently

knows no more about farming than a lawyer in Lincoln's Inn) chooses to impose upon him. Then after that bargain is completed, and the farmer is tied hand and foot by antiquated and impertinent conditions, he commences and continues to growl and grumble at every opportunity to his neighbours and to his landlord's agent, about his rent being too high, &c. &c.

He has, with his eyes open, and—let us hope—when he was sober, entered into a definite contract with another man, and yet he, alone of all British merchants, is not ashamed to ask to be 'let off' his bargain! He begs that he may be 'forgiven' part of the consideration money, in the shape of a percentage reduction from the rent; he prays that the landlord will 'not be hard on him' in construing the conditions to which he has deliberately agreed; in fact, he behaves like a sore child or a sick girl. He comes to live on the goodwill of the other party to the contract; on sufferance, indeed; which is not wholesome for anybody above a lapdog.

Having sacrificed his independence, the tenant naturally grovels to the man who has enslaved and duped him, whereas the landlord—the shopkeeper who has the use of his land to sell—ought rather to be the obsequious one. It is sickening, indeed, to see the abject abasement of some tenants before great landowners.

Six years ago, for certain politic reasons, I was asked to shoot with a landowning lord over some highly-rented farms. I was shocked to find that the 'grim earl' had, that morning, ordered out, as usual, a dozen of his tenants, to carry our guns and help the hired 'beaters'

drive up the game for us, on the very lands of which those tenants had already bought the use and right to 'quiet enjoyment' as guaranteed by their lord. Of course, if one of those farmers had shot one of the many partridges that fattened on his barley, he would have been fined and ejected from his farm. One of the tenants, a man worth three or four thousand pounds, was, after touching his hat, assigned to me,—worth nothing in the world but the ragged clothes I stood up in,—to carry my extra gun and game-bag, whilst I was to shoot and carry off the game fed and fattened by my attendant at his own expense! Blushing, as is my wont, I quietly declined the assistance proffered me, and I venture to add that my pity and contempt for those truckling tenants were not lessened when I found that they 'looked down' on me for the rest of the day, because I was evidently too insignificant to be accustomed to have wealthy farmers for slaves, to help me bag their game.

For the sake of our history and seedy national songs, if not for their own, I would exhort all farmers to throw cringing to My Lady's dogs and flunkeys. Let them (the farmers, not the flunkeys) make fair bargains for their farms, and stick to them like men. Let them hold up their heads and look their landlords in the face as equals. Let us have no more grumbling, no more grovelling.

Something about foreign competition. I have worked as a labourer myself in the fertile Red River valley of the American wheat belt, and also in the English Midlands, so I know what I am talking about. I will just ask you

one riddle. Can you explain how it is that a 'cute Yankee can grow wheat at sixteen bushels an acre on land rent—but not tax—nor locust—free, can pay his labourers eight shillings a day each, can carry that wheat five thousand miles, and yet sell it at a profit in an English market town, at a price lower than it costs a tenant-farmer to produce similar wheat within a mile of that town, at the rate of thirty-two bushels per acre, on land rented at twenty-one shillings an acre, and worked by labourers paid two shillings a day? Give it up? Oh, you're frightened at the length of the question. Well, perhaps you are right; for on reading it all through again myself it *does* seem, as you say, rather like asking the thirty-nine articles as a double acrostic. If you will listen, I will give you the answer another day. I want you, however, to distinctly understand that the case I have quoted is not a hypothetical one; it is a wholesale fact. That wheat can be grown in India and sold in London at three shillings and eightpence per bushel, to return the grower a profit, I hope may soon be possible; it is at least possible to believe it, as it is that Australasian mutton may be bought in London at under sixpence a pound.

There are actually Englishmen and English newspapers, who still clamour for the reimposition of the corn duties, and what is more, think that they may get what they want. That those lunatics will be satisfied, is about as possible as that one of Pitt's parliaments should rise again. But let us suppose, for argument's sake, that import duties were again

to be levied on corn: the sole benefit would be to the landlords, who would naturally raise their rents to the exact amount of the duties. The labourer would of course require higher wages, to meet the increased cost of food and clothing, &c., and if he didn't get them, he would immediately rebel. The tenant would thus be worse off than before, by this national gift to the territorial aristocracy, and he would have to pay more for every single thing he purchased in the open market, whether clothing, groceries, implements, fertilisers, or education for his children. Forgive my trotting out this trite truism once more; the existence of the lunatics I have mentioned is my only excuse for inflicting it upon you.

Whatever may be the causes of the distress, it is very certain that the 'hard times' are particularly rough on the frequently-forgotten farmer's daughter. Poor, unlucky, little maid, my heart bleeds with pity for you. Your father may be a fool, and your mother a vixen, but you can't help that; 'would to God you could'—I hear you murmur with quivering lips—'for you have to suffer bitterly for it.' Hold up your head, little one, and tell me all your trouble, for God knows, I have had trouble enough myself. But—darling, don't look at me with those gentle, innocent, blue eyes, through that cruel mist, I can't bear it. There, give me just one soft, sweet kiss; let me kiss away those tears, and love me a little, my pretty lassie, and come and lie down here on this cowslip bank under the shady may-thorn bush, and let us watch the frightened minnows dart up through those babbling ripples over the

moosy stones. That's right, rest your bonnie head on my arm, so that I can watch the timid rosy glows dance on and off your dimpled cheeks, my wearie dearie, and tell me softly what's the matter,—you know I will never go back on you. There, that's better ; don't sob any more, let the sun shine out again through those blue eyes ; just another little smile, just another little peep at those shy violets in the dew, and just one sweet, lingering kiss on those red lips —and now twitter your unhappy little twit.

And the heartbroken little soul nestles up to me, and tells me between her tears a tale so sad, that it almost tears my rough old heart ; yet it is but one that many, many 'doleful maids of Arcadee' could tell just now. One can't help loving these innocent, blushing rustics. Hidden from the wicked world in long-forgotten valleys, or lost in the old-time, dreamy woodlands of our land, are gentle maidens of more bewitching, healthy, honest beauty, than you could find in any other country under heaven.

Of course she doesn't tell me the whole truth, but she tells me enough to let me know the rest. For she whispers not a word about the dying hope which is wearing out her young, longing heart, but the sad, low, trembling tone, and wistful, far-off look, and long-drawn breath—say clearly enough, 'Nobody I care for comes a-courtin' me.' And why ? Because the grey, weather-beaten old father has lost nearly all he had, and there is no young farmer now, nor any one that she would like, to love her any more.

She went to school away from home and learned to be a little village lady ; now the maid-

of-all-work has had to be discharged, and she must do instead the menial work she never learned to do, whilst her soured mother snarls at her all day. 'Hard work hurts nobody'—say you; 'Quite right'—say I, but put yourself in that poor maiden's place, and you would find it very—*so* hard—to bear.

At seventeen, everything looked bright and happy. Her father had promised her his finest cow and a thousand golden sovereigns on the day that she should marry. Young farmer-fellows, with a thousand pounds apiece, would call in on their way to market, and have a cup of the famous pippin cider and a crust of bread and cheese, and sometimes a little chaff. And one of them—a dreaming, blue-eyed boy—would ride to church on Sunday evenings, and they would wander slowly home together in the gloaming, through the bluebell glade. And sometimes she rode the roguish little unkempt pony into town, to buy, perhaps, 'a bunch of blue ribbons to tie up her bonny brown hair.' And——

'The dream was much too sweet, and much too short'—she murmurs in her lonely bitterness. She was waked up roughly to do the house and dairy drudgery. Her thousand pounds are gone from her for ever. They went with nearly all her father's hard-earned savings into the Landlord's bank at Temple Bar, and My Lady spent them all, one night, on flowers and other fading beauties for her Park Lane ball, to fête a prince who promenaded there for all one hour. And the spotted cow died after the flooded summer. The young farmer-fellows have also lost a good deal too, and they are shy, and do not come to

see her now ; and the quick-tempered, blue-eyed boy is sleeping in Egyptian sand. The dear old pony has been sold, and all the dainty frocks and roguish hats have disappeared.

Things may all come right—some day again—perhaps, but they cannot mend before the dreamy spring-time of her womanhood, and her hot-blooded young heart, have passed away for ever.

Perhaps hers is a very unjustifiable despair, but it is quite as bitter for all that, for I have sometimes found that trouble with sneers instead of sympathy is double trouble.

As I turn wistfully away, I cannot help crooning to myself the quaker-poet's last lines on another country maiden's disappointment :—

‘For of all words of tongue or pen,
‘The saddest are these—‘It might have been.’’

THE FLOWER-SHOW.

THAT which some natives call a ‘orticultral expedition’ is *The Genteel* excitement of the summer season. Do you know how much is briefly comprehended in this saying? ‘Genteel,’ then, is the highest hadjective of praise, that the genteel ladies of the market town can bestow on anything that’s visible or invisible, from the headless ghost of the haunted grange up to the gout that lives within the local lord. For instance, at a sheep and bullock show at Reading, on the day after the glorious pounding of Egyptian

patriots by the British fleet, I overheard a grocer's lady, in an ecstasy of loyalty and a gorgeous green and purple gown, enthuse, and call the Prince of Wales's flunkey (on my pointing out the latter as the Prince) '*the Ginteeelist gentleman she 'ad hever beyeld.*' But to descend to humanity again. To be generally adjudged a genteel gentleman in the country, you should appear in a black tail-coat, a trifle shiny about the shoulders, and your boots should squeak. Your face should be white and plump and shine with honey-soap-suds; it should be surrounded with sleek and plastered locks and soft and glossy 'weeper whiskers,' and it must wear a sempiternal simper, ready to collapse into a toothy smile without the slightest provocation. You must be a little mixed about your h's, negatives, and verbs. Your handkerchief should smell of myrrh, aloes, cassia, and tepid garlic, and you will wear a false shirt-front and cuffs. A glossy golden locket, no larger than a muffin, with two tinted photographs inside, should dangle from your watch-chain, and you must sport two mourning-rings. You will always be perlite, and quite a 'lady's man,' and you will never say anything that is not superlatively insipid and inane.

After all that parable, can you understand me when I say that the Flower Show is *The Genteel festivity*? It is more select, you know, than a sheep and cattle show, for onions and potatoes have more modest manners than improper cows and pigs, and of course it is far above comparison with a 'kiss-in-the-ring' fête of the jolly Foresters. But, above all, it is

supremely aristocratic, since it is presided over by a puissant acre-king; is held in that prince's gardens, and you have just a chance of being stared at by the mighty potentate *himself*.

These flower-show functions are so much alike, that, if I tell you of the last I ventured to attend, you may take its programme for them all.

It was prophesied two months beforehand in the 'Slugbury Argus, with which is Incorporated the Maingiton Mirror,' to the intent that all the young ladies might enjoy as long a flutter of expectancy as possible. Madame McPlacket, of Maingiton, and Mesdames O'Rooshin, of Slugbury, the rival 'French Mantilla makers, modes Et robes' (as their professions are thus blazoned on their doors) are immediately overwhelmed with orders, muslins, ribbons, and coy maidens. The waiting-rooms at these 'Establishments for young ladies' are but limited in area, which is very tiresome, for Miss Bee (who is moderately well off) resents being obliged to speak to Miss Sea (who is poor) in the presence of Miss Hay (who is very well off); so the fair patients sit silently, or whisper pleasantly behind their hands to their sisters, whilst they wait their turns to be 'fitted on.' You see that, unlike a well-bred drawing-room lady, a country girl is not clever enough to stare at and through, without recognising, a neighbour that she knows quite well. It was dreadfully provoking for Miss Wortlebury—who is an only child and determined that her flower-show frock shall be the envy and surprise of everybody—to be obliged to fit on in the shop the tacked-up

skirt with the idiosyncratic trimmings pinned thereon, whilst those two common Barton girls—who always copy her—take turns in squinting through a clear smear in the frosty-glass door next the passage, in the intervals when that transparent spot is not flattening the nose of that sly, ill-natured gossip, Julia Smee.

A fortnight before the great event, every sign-post, barn-door, church-porch, and Tea-coffee-pepper-and-tobacco shop window for miles around, breaks out with symptoms of apparently a most appalling epidemic. Malignant ulcers of scarlet, pink, magenta, yellow, green, and blue, appear in confluent blotches over the leprous whiteness of the patients. On approaching the sufferers with fortitude and resignation, you are much relieved to find that the spotted plague is merely the illuminated notice of the impending saturnalia. You are assured in tremendous type that the 'Grand Annual Horticultural Exhibition, Fête, and Gala will, D.V.' (the patriarchal people of Arcadia always approve this means of propitiating a possible earthquake, so D.V. appears in solemn, black 'church text') 'be Inaugurated by the Gracious permission and under the Distinguished Patronage of SIR POMPEY INARDS-PANCHER, BART., F.R.Z.S., F.R.H.S., M.R.A.S.E., and J.P.' (the great man's name in huge magenta hieroglyphics with scarlet knobs) 'etc. ! etc. ! etc. ! in the Gardens of Swintrow Hall, on Wednesday, August 15, on which Occasion the whole of the Spacious and Magnificent Grounds will be Muni-ficently thrown open' (in yellow and green letters alternately). 'The Splendid BAND' (has a whole line to itself of red-coated giants) 'of the Slugbury

Princess Beatrice's own Royal Commissariat Volunteer Atillery by kind permission of Sub-Lieutenant Stiggins, commanding, will perform at intervals during the afternoon. Silver Cups and prizes to an amount Exceeding £30!! will be offered for competition. Entrance for Carriages by the Inards lodge, the gates of which will be thrown open precisely at 3 o'clock; for pedestrians at the stable-yard door. Admission for Ladies and Gentlemen before 5 p.m. Half-a-Crown; for men and women after 5, one shilling, children half-price.'

The day has at last dawned. Very few of the young ladies have slept a wink last night. There are many anxious tappings of those lying weather-glasses, which all declare it is going to be a glorious day, so everybody is in high spirits. The damsels all forthwith begin with one consent to get themselves into too tight boots and unaccustomed corsets, 'to make them easy for the afternoon, you know,' and none of them eat much at the midday dinner.

Punctually at three the Slugbury brake and pair of greys, which took up some town visitors at the 'Inards Arms' in the market-place, meets the drag, from the 'Pancher Head' of Main-giton, drawn by a piebald and a bay, at the sweep turning into the entrance-lodge. Loud hoorays, and foghorn brays from the two battered, copper coach-horns, are exchanged between the rival 'turn-outs' of the rival towns. Then, after the two drivers to the manner born have made the inevitable invidious comparisons between the merits of their sorry teams, they canter back to their respective towns for two

more pints apiece and other festive coach-loads.

I should not omit to say that it is *de rigueur* for all fashionable young ladies to don their lavender kid gloves on leaving the paternal roof, however long the drive may be to the flower fête (called 'a feet'); and no handkerchief must be unfolded from its neat flat square until four o'clock, however importunate a cold may be.

The parish clerk, who collects in church on the first Sunday in every month, and cleans Sir Pompey's boots and lamps on week-days, takes the half-crowns at the entrance, as he is used to the receipt of custom. He has on, to-day, his full funeral dress-suit of black, although the too-long, crumpled trousers, turned up at the bottoms, show a joyful white tape binding on the inside edge. He wears also his only high silk hat, still nearly covered with the permanent close *crêpe* band, bearing fish-hook marks of where sundry flowing hatbands and wedding favours have aforetime been affixed thereto. His hands have apparently been boiled or scalded with a view to get them more purple and genteel than ordinary. He carries out his duties with the air of illimitable importance, and the melancholy abstraction proper to a sexton at a burial—before the gin is handed round. He is assisted at the gate by a gaunt, velveteen-clad keeper, and by a plump policeman, who has evidently 'just washed down a uncommon good dinner with 'alf a gallon of old 'ome-brewed' in Swintrow servants' hall. These three functionaries shed an awe-inspiring

dignity around, which is very properly softened somewhat by the word 'Welcome???' (followed for some obscure reason by three notes of interrogation), which forms a triumphal red and white calico arch above the blue, green, and black officials.

The Tenants, the Doctors, the Drapers, the Ironmongers, the Butchers, the Parsons, the Grocers, and people after their kind, from all the region round about, together with their wives, their daughters, their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts, and now and then a brother or a son—struggle through the gate and form up on the inside in family platoons and squads, that the family ganger may deal out to every individual a ticket of admission. This would require a keeper's pocket to hold it all, so everybody carries it like a shield in front, for nobody would mutilate or lose it, as it is a veritable work of art, and its possession is a certificate of gentility for at least a year to come. The card is blue, out of compliment to Sir Pompey, who is a divine-right Tory, and it is about as thick, but by no means as light, as a round of toast. Above the superscription is a magnificent engraving of Sir Pompey's crest: 'A Porpus, rampant, dormant, az.; langued and gorged gu.; wings expanded, ppr.; grasplant in the sinister paw a flagon, arg.,' with the motto 'Fede and Fear not' on a handsome scroll underneath. As we pass the front of the Hall, we see the show tent on the farther side of the lawn, and standing on the terrace, *close to us*, is the proud baronet HIMSELF—Sir Pompey, looking extremely genteel and facetious. He

nods a nice, patronising nod to most of the squads of visitors, who all make profound obeisance to him.

Sir Pumpy—as his butler calls him, or Sir Pompous—as some profane country people have it, is the descendant of two very worthy British merchants. His paternal grandfather was Mr. Simeon Pancher, a Bristol molasses importer, who owned many slaves in the West Indies, and his maternal granpa was Mr. Pompey Inards, citizen and girdler, of Mincing Lane, a tea-broker known throughout the City as the best tea-taster by its smell in London; indeed, he always boasted to his friends at dinner that his nose (a kind of brown banana) had been worth 'alf a million to him. When Mr. Pancher's only son married Miss Inards, the co-heiress (the other daughter having been run off with by an insolvent lawyer, had been disowned), the two fathers-in-law promised to buy a grand estate and present it to their united children, if they would only be so good as to raise an heir on whom it could be entailed, and thus create a county family.

Seven years after the marriage, the young people, who had, of course, adopted the double-barrelled name of Inards-Pancher, had not yet fulfilled the trifling condition which was to make them great. The fathers became snappish, the insolvent lawyer and his family of eight, humble and expectant, the son and daughter, dejected, and filled with remorse at having been such undutiful children. However, Mr. and Mrs. Pancher did not despair, but took some quiet lodgings in London on the advice of a medical man, whom

they had consulted, as Mrs. P. was in a delicate state of health.

Two months later, the two old fogeys—who were being watered down at Bath for the relief of their respective gout—were intoxicated with delight at receiving a hurried note from their son announcing the birth last night of a son and heir!—who was doing well, as also was his mother, except for a slight tendency to hysterics, on account of which the doctor strictly forbade anybody to visit her for a few days. The two old men gave the astonished messenger a ten-pound tip for the news he brought, and sent him back with a joint letter of hysterical thanks, promising to hurry up to London as soon as their own doctor would allow them. Three days afterwards, although their gout was worse, for, in their joy, they had thrown physic and moderation to the dogs, they posted up to town, and there beheld the family pride, which each swore was exactly like himself. The silly old men loaded the little boy with very costly and useless presents, but they were not allowed to see his mother for a week, as she was still very weak and excitable in a darkened room.

I have just discovered that all this has nothing to do with the flower-show, but I will finish it as shortly as possible. That dear little baby is now, by a freak of a facetious fate, Sir Pompey Simeon Inards-Pancher.

The grandfathers loyally carried out their promise, and then, having nothing else to do, died, leaving all their piled-up wealth (except a thousand pounds for the disowned daughter) to their dutiful children, who for some thirty years

enjoyed it, and then, having bought a baronetcy for forty thousand pounds spent in their county elections, they also were gathered to their fat fathers, leaving Swintrow Hall entailed on their only 'son.'

The 'cute lady's-maid, who had bought for twenty golden sovereigns the baby of a buxom London housemaid green from the country, and had carried it with perfect secrecy from a private hospital for such cases to Mrs. Pancher's darkened room—died some ten months later. Thinking to get more hush-money, she had threatened Mr. Pancher to 'peach.' Prepared for this, he 'humoured her' until the astute doctor (who had attended Mrs. Pancher at the 'birth') induced the lady's-maid, for extremely high wages, to become his housekeeper. Very shortly afterwards, she was shut up by the doctor as a suicidal lunatic—even an easier deed in those days than now—and two months later, she died after a short illness. The doctor lived long afterwards, and died, much to his neighbours' surprise, very well off indeed.

Neither Sir Pompey, nor any other living person, knows the shady secret of his babyhood. All the conspirators are dead, and the foster-mother, who fed him, as 'Mrs. Pancher was too weak,' is now an honoured pensioner at the Back Lodge. She knew nothing of the little game played so near her, and she never tires of telling how thin the little Pompey got by depending at first on Mrs. Pancher, and how plump he immediately became when he was handed over to her, his doting foster-mother.

There he stands now, at the edge of the

terrace, the embodiment of large littleness. A high drab hat perched on the side of his shiny head, sporting-looking brown and white check coat and trousers, and a very broad white waistcoat covering his balloon-like body, over which hangs, from side to side, like a gilded suspension bridge, a monster pure gold watch-chain weighing a pound and a half, including the locket containing a couple of faggots of the late Lady Pancher's putative hair. He wears white 'spats' over his patent-leather boots—of which the left has a large glossy bow-window to cover a combined corn and bunion—and he carries a sleek cane with a large golden knob at the top threaded with a silken tassel.

Sir Pompey, who is about five-and-forty, is so round, he doesn't look an inch over five foot nothing. He weighs, his butler says, 'seventeen stone if 'e's a pound.' His legs are ridiculously short and fat, and although wide apart at the feet, they somehow give you the impression that they are parallel with each other from end to end. His arms are much too short to have any room for elbow joints, they merely 'ply' like chunks of a six-inch cable. The chunks are terminated by pudgy paws, planted here and there with long black bristles. His face is composed of a thick, dimpled wad of German suet, out of which peep now and then two lashless, small red eyes. Eyebrows are conspicuous by their absence, and there is but very little nose. The mouth is large, unctuous, and good-natured, with its lower lip turning a little inside out. There is no neck, but three or four chins instead, and the ears resemble crumpets, if crumpets

could be crimson. The extensive cheeks refuse to grow any crop except seventeen greenish yellow blades of a wiry couch, and the nose monopolises the upper lip. Sir Pompey breathes alternately, and sometimes simultaneously, through his mouth and nose with a deep, rich, baritone wheeze. Such is the county god—the golden fatted calf, which the Gentiles have come to-day to worship in his sanctuary.

Ye almighty Squires! Well may ye say ‘There are none other gods but we,’—the Rustics shout Amen!

Strangely enough, Sir Pompey is very like the picture in the dining-room of his putative grandfather, old Pancher; but then all well fed pigs’ faces are alike.

The ‘Peerage’ says that ‘Sir Pompey is the lineal descendant of a fierce Norman knight, who devastated the Welsh marches in obedience to the commands of his friend and sovereign the King. He was surnamed by his devoted troopers “Pain cher,” or dear bread, because he brought about a famine wheresoever he rode on his reckless forays. His descendants, true to the noble traditions of their Family as the hereditary custodians of the Cambrian borders, settled at Bristol in contiguous proximity to the Principality, where their name became corrupted in the course of centuries into the honourable one of “Pancher.”’

Whilst admitting the absolute accuracy of the Peerage, I cannot say that Sir Pompey strikes me with the awe which was such a distinguishing characteristic of his terrible ancestor. The present head of the family seems more likely to

bring about the family famine amongst his neighbours, by eating everything himself, for verily 'his god is his belly.'

Whilst I have been musing, and worshipping Sir Pompey, three very 'umble parsons have laid siege to him, and are now licking the dust off the latchets of his shoes. Then they intone startling narratives of their herculean parish labours, and infest him with minute accounts of the prodigious sums they have spent out of their own pockets in relieving the deserving poor, accompanied by casual words, not meant for hints, that a ten-pound note towards these inroads on their scanty stipends would be acceptable. They forget to add that some of the deserving poor have just come home from college and are being dunned by the cricket professor for some trifling debts. Each parson smiles a ghastly smile upon Sir Pompey, and a garghoilish gape upon the other two when they interrupt him, and collectively, those three gents in black are a noble example of brotherly love.

The Volunteer band more than fulfils its promise to 'perform at intervals,' for it performs perpetually the most hazardous facial gymnastics, the while it bawls and bellows, barks and buzzes, and bangs and brays, as if the very instruments as well as the performers would surely burst. There are ten musicians, of which three blow down trombones, two beat drums, two blast into sackbuts, one bleats through a dulcimer, and two bay through shawms.

The music struck me as being very like my ideal of the natural symphony which so enchanted Adam, when all the animals of the world

came up to him and demanded in a chorus to be named. I thought it therefore singularly appropriate to a rustic fête. I may describe it shortly as a harmony in roars and barks and yelps; howls, growls, grunts and chirrups; cackles, caws and croaks and crows; coos and quacks and lows; purrs and bleats, and mews and squeaks, and squalls and shrieks, neighs, brays, and snorts and moans, and snarls and groans. Of course this 'music of the spheres' cannot be produced without constant refreshment, so the band drinks round and wets its whistles once in twenty minutes, besides a general swill between the 'tunes.' One of the ten is thus always off duty, availing himself of the two minutes allowed him in which to get himself outside of the contents of the quart pot, which is as constantly refilled by an attentive cellarman of Sir Pompey's.

Of the tunes, the greatest favourite with the band and audience is a march called the 'Attack of Paincher the Terrible,' composed by Sir Pompey himself in honour of his valiant ancestor. After hearing that march, even at a distance, I can quite believe the Peerage statement that 'the distracted Welsh died of fright at the sound of the Norman knight's approach'—if his troopers played that blood-curdling pæan. The tune that is repeated the next largest number of times, 'by special request,' is of course our old friend 'The last Rose of Summer,' with sundry very effective extempore variations; and yet somehow I quite longed for winter to come again, in which there are no roses to serenade. We stand around, entranced in a

delicious reverie, drinking in (not the beer, no such luck) those soft and lovely strains. Everybody's body involuntarily wobbles slowly to one side and back again, and glides up and down on tiptoe, in unison with those dear old heart-piercing wails, which occur ever and anon, as the rose, or the patient (I never learned the words) repeatedly recovers from his spasms in the stomach and doesn't die when he ought.

One of the sackbut blowers is so much affected, either by the sadness of the theme or the beer, that he persists in inserting a very touching 'tremolo' at every possible opportunity. So overcome was he with emotion at last, that his tremolo took to working overtime, and frequently staggered into the next verse, where the patient is evidently in a delirium tremendous, and hurling the crockery again at the nurse and looking-glass. The drum-major finally thought it time to quietly admonish the too zealous sackbut-blaster, whose eyes were just then closed in an ecstasy of pathos, or of beer, so he deftly inserted the huge flannel end of his left drumstick into the sackbut's brazen mouth, thus causing it to make a very uncertain sound. The sackbutter enraged, retaliated by banging the drum-major's snub nose with the rim of his already battered sackbut, which caused the fourth encore of the 'last rose'—but three—to come to a sudden and fearful end, for it was imperatively necessary for the conductor to retire for a few minutes, whilst his insulted nose scattered red roses o'er his tunic and the turf.

The lady audience fainted or fled away screaming into the onion tent. The gentlemen

ran up in shoals to see the coming fight, but the tiny Sub-lieutenant Stiggins blasted all their hopes, by angrily commanding his battery to pile arms, limber up, and retreat by forced marches to the stableyard for an interval of ten minutes, and there and then to undergo a close inspection by the pump nozzle. But the battery is too fatigued or full to march, and so, after floundering about a bit around the stand, it is carried out on hurdles by a back way, on the shoulders of an ambulance corps of keepers, to the pump, under whose cooling streams each of the 'Princess Beatrice's own royal panting volunteers' is forcibly held until sober enough to go to sleep quietly in a loose box.

The sun is now oppressively hot. There is not a breath of air. Everybody is presspirin' freely. The farmers 'and sich' mop their red faces and bald heads with speckled green and mauve handkerchiefs. Their wives broil quietly on garden gridiron seats (where many birds perched just now), and sorrowfully daub their cheeks and necks with folded handkerchiefs, whilst clouds of biting gnats compass them round about. Their daughters would gladly mop their faces too, but it isn't genteel, so they swelter in their uncomfortable clamminess, until they can sneak off to the shrubbery by the lake and revel in a surreptitious 'swab.' The poor girls' tight, hard, ready-made, new boots pinch and burn their tender feet until they are blistered into agonies. Their 'corsets' don't creak as much as they did, but they cling so closely, that they almost suffocate the poor, pink, tortured bodies. Their lavender kid gloves, for

which they gave three and threepence a pair, and put on new at two o'clock, are now split all down inside the thumbs, are greasy through, and dyed a dirty blue by that tiresome blue admission ticket.

In short, everybody is red-hot, clammy, worried, pinched, parched with thirst, suffering bootal tortures, and extremely wretched; and everybody looks it; yet everybody flatters itself that it looks pleasant and accustomed to these court festivities every month. Indeed, I am inclined to think that poor Miss Wortlebury is, after all, to be envied, although she was awfully cut up at having to stay at home because of a bad bilious attack, thus wasting that magnificent frock which was to astonish the *élite* of Slugbury and its neighbourhood.

Apart from the heat, however, there is an almost universal generous joy amongst the ladies, for there are ever and anon fresh figures, frocks, and complexions to be criticised and condemned; there are always certain family gangs to be constantly avoided in walking from place to place, because they haven't got as much money as your other friends; and there are the five rich sets, which came late in carriages and pairs, to be closely followed in the hope that you may be seen talking to one of them. Yonder, a vicar's wife has been tacking and manœuvring for twenty minutes, and has at last managed to introduce her four dummel daughters to Sir Pompey (who is a widower), and who shakes each virgin's throbbing hand with two fat fingers. That crafty priestess knows that all eyes are watching her now, and that, though

they are all envious, they will make much more of her, because the oracle, Sir Pompey, has wheezed to her and hers. She and her daughters are gorgeously arrayed to-day, and no outsider would ever guess that three out of the five were yesterday helping to do the weekly wash in the scullery at the vicarage, to save keeping more than one persecuted general drudge, whilst the other two lounged languidly in the drawing-room to receive possible visitors, and assure them that dear mamma and Beatrice and Violette have just gone out into the village to relieve the poor and needy.

The flowers themselves are by no means the chief attraction at the show; the day is really devoted to a Pompey, frock, and hat display; for there are very few young men present, and these all look supremely silly as they smirk about, not knowing where to stow away their awkward paws.

The flowers and vegetables are disposed on a long middle table going down the length of the 'Pavilion' and on tiers of shelves lining the sides. The flowers are numerous, but by no means incomparably fine, except the cut 'book-kies,' each of which contains all the colours of the rainbow at least twice over; but the vegetables are superb. There are pumpkins (rather like Sir Pompey) weighing twenty-five pounds apiece, (has any civilised white man ever eaten a pumpkin?), and there are potatoes of prodigious diameter, and probably as insipid as their propagators. There are tons of parsnips, for those fabulous savages who are said to feed on them; there are hundredweights of artichokes, and

there are pyramids of immense green apples, which make your inside ache to look at. Sir Pompey's own gardeners have, of course, carried off all the rewards offered to poor cottagers, and, as a general rule, all the other prize-winners have also stolen their exhibits.

I really cannot stay in the tent any longer; it is literally crammed to suffocation with granmas and onions and farmers and pumpkins and parsons and garlic and people and dress-improvers and 'cherry-pie' and potatoes and half-price children and vegetable marrows and flower-pots—the combined flavour of all of which is blended with the sickening reek of 'Odour de Maingiton'—a scent for which the nasty little town is locally famous, and which has been brought here to-day in overpowering wafts by most of the visitors' handkerchiefs.

On turning my face up to gasp for a breath of fresh air after forcing my way out of the tent, I was surprised to see that the sky had suddenly become overcast; a minute later, and I noticed that Sir Pompey had also observed it. He hesitated a moment, as if thinking, and then quietly walked off into the Hall, and does not come out again. He sees it is going to thunder directly, and, like the sensible and kind-hearted man that he is, he hastens to lose himself in time, so that he shall not be obliged to invite all the *canaille* to take shelter in his empty palace.

A few weatherwise farmers run to warn their wives and daughters of the coming storm, but they cannot find them, for they are walking about in the shrubberies, or down by the lake,

or teasing the gold-fish in the ponds. Five minutes later, a sharp flash of lightning, and a sullen growl of thunder immediately after, frighten the timid in all parts of the 'spacious grounds,' and they run like hamstrung rabbits into the tent, which is soon packed like a huge sardine box. The last straggler has barely reached it, when the old trees begin to sing and moan with the coming storm, and the rain comes down in slow, hot, heavy, straightdown strokes. Everybody looks scared. Three or four young farmers endeavour to make people feel less frightened, by uttering three or four sorry jokes; but the mammas look more grave than ever, as you should never smile in a thunder-storm, 'you might get struck'; so those wise young men tempt providence no more.

Congratulations are gloomily exchanged that all managed to gain the shelter before the rain came on. The young ladies, however, look ruefully at other girls' frocks and furbelows, and wonder in silent anxiety what their own are like. All the pretty pure white dresses with pink or sky-blue sashes, and all the delicate, branching fuchsias are hopelessly crushed and flattened and crumpled up, but the bewitching hats and ostrich feathers and sphinx-like pumpkins and unimpressible potatoes are luckily not damaged at all.

Eight minutes pass by like long days, and there are faint hopes that the storm may soon break off. On looking over the heads of the sardines, from the top of a stolid pumpkin on which I am standing, I now see a little quiet surging here and there. The cause of this mild

crushing is soon apparent ; the roof of the tent has some 'dropped stitches' disposed at frequent intervals over its sodden surface, and the rain has at last found these out. Little tepid streamlets trickle through, first on to Miss Annie's lovely ostrich feather, and thence down the back of Miss Annie's warm and clammy neck, until they are soaked up by a little shudder and the neatest little embroidered neckpiece. The many Miss Annies are so selfish as to wish to escape from these inquisitive dewdrops, so they try to move just far enough away to let some other unsuspecting damozels have a turn at the heartless drip ; hence that 'surging.'

Now the wind begins to get up, and the geraniums and parsnips begin to get down, and the poles of the 'Pavilion' commence to creek ominously. One of the huge iron tent pegs, at the back where nobody sees it, is very slowly drawn out of Sir Pompey's lawn by the tugging ropes, and so one of the four main-masts begins to wobble in a most eccentric manner. Another cloud hovers over us, and the rain comes down harder than ever. One side of the tent flops loudly, twice, like a startled albatross. Everybody looks up with knitted brows and open mouth, and trembles at what may happen next. There is not much time to tremble in. A moment later, a part of the flopping roof is blown away ; the wind and rain instantly rush in, and the whole of the canvas bubble quietly but firmly collapses and heels over on to the lawn, where it lies quivering in its death-throes. It has carried with it five passion-flowers, six suspended orchids 'of sorts,'

three bonnets, eleven strings of onions, seventeen hats, three *fichus*, numberless prize cards, twenty-three parasols, and last but not least Sir Pompey's life-size crest, which but an hour before had proudly pranced above the Pavilion porch. Strangely enough, the 'dormant porpus' does not look so happy as he ought in his native element, as he lies there, panting, in the rain. Perhaps his evident displeasure is due to his 'flagon' getting spilt or mixed with water.

For half a minute, the wretched holiday-makers stand stupified, left high, but of course not dry, amongst the *débris* of the flower-pots and pumpkins, and netted here and there by the tent ropes. Nobody is hurt, but everybody is sure he or she is doomed to something very dreadful. Seven or eight disagreeable boys, home for the holidays, very rudely laugh out loud at the forlorn faces around them, and that does not improve matters.

However, help is near at hand, for here come two of Sir Pompey's pompous footmen, with stolid and stately steps, bringing five umbrellas and two small mackintoshes, but what are they among so many? Then, all with one consent, stampede for the stable-yard, which is only three hundred yards away. Having gained the grateful shelter of the full loose-boxes and half-empty coach-houses, skirts are wrung out and pinned up inside outwards; 'ladies' superfine, high-heeled, French-leather, Oxford shoes' are emptied; handkerchiefs are tied over sodden hats like pies going to the baker's, and the carriage seats which have been revelling in the rain in the open yard are mopped over with

the wrappers. The drunken Volunteers are still dozing under the mangers, and are the only happy people there. The men hurry up the traps and gigs, and all embark for their respective homes, whilst the rain comes pitilessly down, drenching the cowering wretches to the skin.

Just as most reach their own roofs again, the unkind clouds are rolled away; the glorious western sun shines out, making the myriads of raindrops everywhere sparkle like iridescent diamonds; and the grateful earth 'sizzles,' and exhales her balmy breath in a delicious dewy mist around and over everything.

Thus ends the annual 'appy day' of the Arcadian Miss.

STATE-SUPPORTED PARSONS.

THE Rustic Reverend leads a life that's quite unlike his Urban brother's.

The town rector has a rough time sometimes. He is always liable to be scorched by that fierce light, which beats upon his pulpit and his doxy to a fifty or five hundred-candle power, according to the number of spluttering firebrands in his parish. He has, probably, in his 'Church of England Army,' a score or two of fussy vestrymen, narrow-minded bigots, retired intolerant tradesmen, crotchety rubrickers, straitlaced scandalmongering shrews, and other spies, insubordinates, and uncertain soldiers, whom he dare not shoot nor dare discharge. And he has also to

contend with neighbouring parsons, and popular prowling preachers unattached, who cut off his stragglers and supplies. And there are guerilla bands of 'Baptists,' 'Methodists,' and 'Salvationists,' 'Catholics,' 'Jews,' 'Infidels,' and 'Heretics,' who rove around his flanks and entice away many of his boldest soldiers with their alms and ammunition—deserters who prefer irregular warfare of a novel kind. He has to work at least as hard on weekdays as on Sabbaths, for there are many hundreds of the poor and sick to visit, and some of these are sights so heartrending that they sometimes melt the fastenings of his privy-purse; for the public parish fund is not (as in the country) his to spend or hoard at will. And he must keep, and keep in order, one or sundry curates too, no easy matter, in these days of milk-and-water Romish martyrs. Thus, though his emoluments are lifehold, the urban parish priest is perhaps not much overpaid.

But the Provincial Parson has often only *one* person to propitiate—the consequential lady of the Squire.

He has merely to treat that touchy dame with unctuous tact, and all will be well with him. He studies her crotchets and caprices to the exclusion of nearly everything and everybody else. He changes his 'convictions' and opinions every quarter as she changes hers. He is evangelical when she has neuralgia and gets low in spirits; he rises rapidly into a rabid ritualist when My Lady has returned from sojourning at Brighton or abroad, or if she be convalescent during Lent, and he becomes a beaming broad-churchman at election times, when he is wanted

as a tout to wheedle independent voters. In fact, he has merely to say or act the right thing at a moment's notice, and My Lady Bountiful is his good—albeit rather portly—fairy. As in the old story, let him play lard-bacon to the Begum of Bombay, but on a very tiny stage, and he will soon bask in the despot's sunny smiles and may become in time her idol.

He has nought to do on weekdays, save the visiting and burial of four sick persons and young children spread over a year, and but three hours' easy *vivâ voce* reading on the Sabbath. There are only three hundred and thirty-six souls in his parish, and *he* perchance will never save a one of them. He need not spend a penny of his pay upon the poor. The parish schools and sick and paupers are supported by the Squire as part of his *ménage*, like his pointers and My Lady's poodles or the broken-down old oaks and beeches in the park, that they may, under the cloak of charity, add to his patriarchal power and prestige, and grease the 'narrow path' up which he means to slide some day. Nor does the 'cute and charitable Squire forget, that his voluntary parish payments, gifts, and pensions, keep those 'meddlesome government inspectors' from interfering with 'his people' on his own estate. 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?'—he asks indignantly, as he thinks of his lands, his labourers, their fathers and their children.

However much a rural rector may have left undone those things which he ought to have done, and done those things which he ought not to have done—so long as his devices and desires

are winked at by the 'Great House,' there is no danger of a sheep of his flock baaing about him to the bishop or to the local newspaper, for every person in the parish, from the large farmer and churchwarden downwards, depends directly or indirectly on the squire, and the squire in all parish politics depends entirely on his Dame. Moreover, the local 'weekly news,' with that noble 'gratitude which consists in a keen appreciation of favours to come,' would not be so unkind as to print anything derogatory to the divinity that doth hedge a squire. And as long as a bishop gets his five thousand pounds a year 'paid reg'lar,' he does not interfere with anything outside of his cathedral (where by the by he has no business), except perhaps to do a little mischief on the bishops' bench as a 'lord spiritual' at Westminster.

Neither is there any fear of anything 'so low as a dissenting preacher' appearing permanently in his parish, for the squire owns every acre of it, and, of course, no self-respecting landowner would permit a nonconformist chapel to be built on his estate. It's true, an awkward squad of the Salvation Army marched one evening down the village street outside of the park gates, but seven of My furious Lady's husband's keepers followed hard upon the band, and noted in the tables of their memory all such foolish virgins and silly swains, living in the Great Man's cottages, as cheered or joined in the procession. Those male dissenters were, of course, discharged from further service with the squire, and all the lasses were naturally noted down and damned as 'doubtful characters' in my lady's

'list of girls old enough for domestic service.' The mothers and fathers of those male and female heretics were let off lightly, being merely warned that they must quit their cottages forthwith, if their sons and daughters did not go henceforward exclusively to church, or if they ever dared to listen again to the seductive brays of the Salvation band. The rector in his righteously wrathful sermon on the Sunday next, described those Booth disciples as 'the hireling goats who blasphemed amongst his flock of lambs,' so those goats never attempted further 'to convert the parish of the devil.' (I wrote to that rector afterwards, asking him to buy me a blaspheming goat for my museum; but I haven't got that goat.)

To properly understand how the gentle parson came to live and thrive upon the British sheep, one must know something of his natural history. He does not seem to have appeared until the advent of prosperity and peace had made the old-time fighting Englishman a plump and easy prey. At all events, it is extremely doubtful if he lived in those dark days when it was dangerous for a man to be abroad, who did not get his bread by battle or by toiling with his brawny arms. Cæsar does not mention having captured any creature, like the modern cleric, at the conquest of these islands. Had he done so, he would have surely commented on it, for a few pairs in hoods processing just ahead of his triumphal chariot, would have been an unique attraction to the circus-loving *plebs*. True, they would have been but tame as gladiators, but they would have formed an interesting feature.

at the Roman Zoo' for curious inspection by the ancient entomologist.

Passing to the time when Henry, Defender of the Faith, saved England from one bloody agrarian revolution by laying the foundations of another, in quietly handing over to his worthless peers the property of the monkeries, which by then had stolen one-third of all the nation's land—we find that there were swarms of a now almost extinct species of parson called a 'Monk.'

Not unlike a few of his successors, the monk was a selfish and a worldly man, but he sacrificed for his doctrine's sake a great deal which most people think alone makes life worth living. He was celibate. He was childless. He could not therefore found, and hoard up for, a family. The modern clergyman, as you are aware, sacrifices absolutely nothing by his so-called service to a heavenly Master. On the contrary, when he takes his vow of office, he gains at once a very valuable worldly prize in the shape of privilege, and position in society. He can marry, and he almost alone of servants, cannot be dismissed from a well-paid place for age or incapacity.

From the time of Queen Elizabeth onwards, parsons have increased and multiplied exceedingly. Shakspeare, the subtlest seer of men's minds that ever sang of them, knew the clergy well and flattered them. For instance, in his grandest play he makes his heroine say :

'Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whilst like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.'

But it was reserved for a pastor of the time of the Tudors, to hand down to posterity a common title of the order of which he was a characteristic ornament, as a national phrase to express the acme of playful perjury and sinful dishonour for the sake of filthy lucre. The Vicar of Bray was bold enough to boast that a parish priest would swallow any belief or deny any doctrine, to be allowed to hang-on to the loaves and fishes. To retain his tithes, he naively confessed that he had turned his coat to suit king, queen, or pope. How proud ought we to be, that our present parsons would not yield to similar temptation.

The modern manufacture of the raw material into a spiritual adviser of men is managed thus. That boy of a highly-respectable and genteel family, who is not clever enough and has not capital enough for commerce, and who is too dull for medicine and law, is generally destined—as his mother says resignedly to her relations—‘to go into the church, as the only thing that he can do.’

This department of the civil service is more genteel, you know, than that professed by other yawning youths in grimy offices in town. So the father sacrifices to his Maker, not his best, as He commanded him, but the worst—the blemished. The budding Samuel is sent at a reduced rate to some seminary devoting all its energies to the cultivation of cricket, Greek, and rackets, surreptitious smokes and tarts and Latin. The vulgar tongue of Shakspeare, Milton, Bunyan, and the rest, who made England Christian more than her divines, is not taught to the

embryo clergyman, perhaps, because it is the language common to dissenters too.

After a six years' sojourn at this school, the stripling is transported with all his vain conceit to Oxford. There he rapidly ripens into that intolerable nuisance called an 'undergrad.' If he does not 'cram for an exam.,' he smokes and drinks and dozes if he can, or cannot, afford it; becomes the debtor of as many shopmen as are weak, or sly, enough to trust him, and does, besides, the little necessary to prevent his being rusticated for two or three years more. After Oxford, he may go through a course of rituals and pharisaic pietism at a curates' training college, or he may undergo a final varnishing by a professional curate-breaker.

It is greatly to his credit that he has never been the creature of ambition, for, probably, the greatest effort in his life has been to 'get a hundred in one innings,' or to keep awake for twelve hours out of twenty-four.

This nice young man, who has never earned a day's bread in his life, who knows absolutely nothing of the world in which men live, now commences, with a 'cheek' which would be impertinent if it were not ridiculous, to teach grey, weatherbeaten men and women 'how to live!'

'He looks so interesting in his cassock, with his pale young face,' sigh some of his enthusiastic women worshippers, and he soon learns how to live on slippers and consumptive maidens. 'He's grown into a pasty-faced and petticoated shrew himself,' says a sour old cynic, who sometimes mutters to himself in church. So you see

that here, as elsewhere, love and envy vie with one another in pursuing the same victim.

Then the shrewd father insures the gentle life of this infant of the third sex, as security for the cost of buying him a living, and pitchforks him into the purchased parish, which, henceforth, *must* have him and keep him, whether it likes or loathes him, until death them do part, fifty years afterwards perhaps.

There, 'billeted' or 'entailed' on 'his parishioners,' he is in the haven where he would be. Henceforward he may do as much or little as he likes. Sometimes he is a really faithful and zealous servant of his Master, and I honour such an one ungrudgingly. His opportunities for doing good are very great, and I have known a few, a very few, self-sacrificing, noble, country clergymen. Curiously enough, not one of that minority despised his dissenting brother-workers. But good or bad, the country parson can't avoid persuading his parishioners that he lives literally like a locust on the parish crops, so long as he is paid by a forced and hated tithe.

The young of the parson are from eight to fourteen in number, spread over a space of six to fifteen years. They are mostly of a somewhat uncooked colour, frequently with pink or tawny spots about the gills, the muzzle, and antennæ. At a very early age they display the characteristic propensity of the parent birds for preying on the parish—from the squire's grandmother downwards.

To an outsider who can see, there is perhaps no sycophant's life so sickening as that of an ambitious village-pastor's wife in a parish

where a rich and mighty squire doth dwell. Behold too the abasement of some pastors in the presence of their patrons. 'How like a fawning publican he looks.' The force of grovelling could no farther go, than in this loathsome licking over of the pursy snob. Perhaps Hamlet was thinking of his chaplain when he said, 'Let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp and crook the pregnant hinges of the knee where thrift may follow fawning.' And then there's the exaggerated puff next day by Mrs. Pastor to such of her neighbours as she patronises, of her exclusive and intimate acquaintance with 'dear Charlotte, or perhaps I should say Lady Shookaplumb,' and of how the handsome Henry, the young heir, has been out riding all the morning with her own two eldest girls, Louise and Constance, and then she silyly begs her silly audience to contradict that rumour that the said young heir had actually proposed to her dear Connie.

Mr. and Mrs. Pastor make a considerable parade of their 'parish work.' They visit the poor and uninfected sick sometimes, and pay away the great man's money out of their own pocket, with a tactful hint of their own generosity. In exchange, some Mrs. Rectors rake and scrape up all the gutter scandal of the place, and, after kneading it at home with a leaven of their own malice and wickedness, present the spicy sweetmeats, with many mysterious shakings of the head, to dear Lady Shookaplumb and her weak-minded husband, at the next afternoon tea-meeting at the Hall. For you must know that though there may be better-educated people in

Mr. Gale Hound

the parish, yet the parson and his wife, because they are genteel—'being gentlemen by profession you know'—alone are eligible to eat of the crumbs that cover the rich man's table.

In the good old days before Parliament put an end to 'Pluralism,' the peers of England quartered half their younger brothers, sons, and sons-in-law on Mother Church. Many peers possess the right to present to more than a score of fat livings each, and they mostly make those presentations, regardless of the feelings of the parishioners, who must keep those clergy by their tithes. As the law, however, will not now allow a parson to hold more than two rectories at once, we do not find that the consciences of younger sons are tender enough to urge them to go into the church as in their grandfathers' days, when many an 'Honourable and Reverend' pluralist never saw the neglected parish from which he drew a portion of his numerous tithes. In our time, the resident rector is more often a poor and cringing second cousin of the squire by marriage, or the spoilt *protégé* of My Lady's aunt, satisfied with a mere four or seven hundred pounds a year.

'Godliness is profitable,' said St. Paul, and perhaps you are not aware how true the pluralist parsons used to prove that text to be. Less than five and twenty years ago, the Reverend the Earl of Guilford died. He did not enjoy as many ecclesiastical dignities as some of his contemporaries, and yet he was Rector of Old Alresford, Rector of New Alresford, Rector of Medstead, Rector of St. Mary's, Southampton, Master of St. Cross 'Hospital,' and Prebendary of Win-

chester. From these livings he received three hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds.

The eighty thousand pounds pocketed, by the Right Honourable and Reverend Lawgiver and Priest, out of the revenues of the Hospital of St. Cross, belonged undoubtedly to the Poor. It is fair, however, to the reverend earl, to say, that he paid a curate seventy-five pounds a year to do the duties at the 'Hospital,' for which he, himself, got the £80,000.

But this noble churchman, whose motto says that 'Virtue is the sole nobility,' did not manage to get a bishopric as well, although his father, Brownlow North (the brother of the traitor-minister who lost us the United States), had held three bishoprics before he was forty, and made *one million and two hundred and forty thousand pounds sterling* out of the state church in his own lifetime. That bishop and his family at one time received the revenues of thirty-three holy offices and livings in the church. (The wages of the present premier of England, who works night and day, and is dismissible at a moment's notice, amount to five thousand pounds a year.)

The rustic rector of our day is usually paid by tithes, besides which he generally has a house and 'glebe,' or farm, provided for him free. Up till fifty years ago, the parson had the right to take his tithes in kind. He literally was 'a hard man reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed.' He sent his servants and his waggons and deliberately seized, and carried off to his 'tithe barn' One Tenth of all the toiling farmer's yearly increase from his

farm. Thus the tithe-collector took away from the producer, a tenth of all the corn, hay, wood and pasturage, fruit and vegetables, milk, wool, calves and lambs and pigs, and many other things, including even eggs and honey. If the rector did not send in time to fetch away his tenth share of the milk before it soured, the farmer was permitted to pour it out upon the ground to waste; the law forbade him to even feed his pigs with it. So the parson drove away the little tenth pig of the half-fed cottier, and grabbed the tenth gooseberry from before the hungry village-children's eyes, to help fill up the rectory pie. The more a man produced upon his farm by better husbandry, the more, of course, became the tithe-collector's share. Thus Mother Church deliberately paid a premium on bad farming.

At last, however, it occurred to the shrewder clergy of fifty years ago, that the cost and trouble of collecting tithes 'in kind' might be avoided by commuting them into corresponding sums of money; and so the tenths are now, by law, all paid in cash. Tithes are a variable Land-tax, exacted from churchmen and dissenters equally.

When Tithes were first established, the parish total was supposed to be divided into four equal parts, of which one went to the bishop, one to maintain the fabric of the church, one was to support the parish poor, and the fourth was for the parson. Thus, out of a total tithe of, say, £800 a year, the parson and the poor were each entitled to two hundred pounds. However, parsons are more powerful than paupers, and so

nowadays the parson pockets the whole eight hundred pounds, and the parish poor don't get a penny of the sum originally set apart for them by law. So the tithe-payers have now another burden laid upon them, that of paying poor-rates to support the paupers fathered on them by the parson.

When the church building wants repair, the rector and his lay-lady-helps first sponge upon the squire, and then they get up a bazaar. A bazaar, as perhaps your pocket may already tell you, is a very genteel method for obtaining money under false pretences. I suppose, as Jesuits tell us, that 'the end'—in all church matters—'justifies the means.'

When the rectory lady meets the neighbouring farmer's wife by accident in the High Street of the keen-eyed country town, she usually (if there's time) gazes intently at the pavement on the other side' the way, or crosses over to it, 'for a farmer is so vulgar, don't you know.' On the evening of the self-same day, that patronising parsoness sends the horses of her dinner guests to feed and stable at the worthy farmer's, a furlong lower down the lane; 'they are so glad to be accommodating to their rector, don't you know.'

As they walk quickly by, the Miss Vicars nod and smile so pleasantly to the timid farmers' wives and daughters at the flower-show and other public festivals, and they look 'real sorry' that, their hands being occupied with holding parasols, they cannot shake the farm-house paws.

At the rector's village school-feast, where

he generously buys the bread and lends the school-house benches, and the farmers' wives co-operate by finding milk and cake and butter—the farm and rectory maidens fraternise for that day, if no genteel rectory friends be present to observe this mixing with the vulgar. From all this, you will see that the clergy in the country practise what they preach, in the divine command that they should one another love.

Why is it that critics always deal gently with the parson?

The idea of the divine right of kings died out a century ago, but the belief in the divine right of State-supported parsons lives yet deeply rooted in the hearts of many millions of our countrymen and women. You will find that those many millions who believe in the divine origin and authority of the Established clergy, fear to find a fault in the so-called ministers of God, owing to the natural superstition that, in accusing the elected representatives, they themselves might be accused of criticising the Elector. In other words, church-goers are afraid lest the motto, which still greets them as they enter many country churches—'Honi soit qui mal y pense'—should have been written for their learning. It is this want of honest criticism, which encourages the disgraceful desertion of duty by some country clergymen.

If the ministers of the Established Church were severally nominated or appointed by some miraculous manifestation of the Creator, or were elected, after prolonged and proper preparation and testing, by some spiritual authority devoting its whole existence solely to the worship and

understanding of God—I should not be surprised that the consciences of God-fearers should make cowards of them in accusing clergymen so delegated.

But every sensible person knows that our State-supported parsons are *not* appointed by any such responsible spiritual authority on earth, as I have suggested; and, with regard to my other proposition, though I cannot of course affirm that their election is not controlled by Almighty agency—yet, so sure am I that in many cases there is no such divine approval, that though I believe implicitly in God myself, I confess I should waver in my belief if I could be *convinced* that God had chosen some clergymen, I have known, to be His representatives.

How are State-supported parsons appointed? Chance-chosen youths, with sufficient money, work or idle through an embryo existence lasting for a certain term of years, and are then labelled ‘ministers of God’ by a very earthly party politician called a ‘bishop.’ With their labels, they are given a comfortable competence out of a hated State tax, which, with valuable social privileges, they enjoy for the remainder of their lives. These men sacrifice no personal comfort or privilege by their service, as do the possibly mistaken papal priests.

And after he is chosen—What is the State-supported Parson? He is a well-paid civil servant of the State.

The earlier Englishmen get to know these things—the better it will be for them, and for the already existing minority of really good and godly clergymen.

THE SQUIRE'S CHURCH-SERVICE.

I HAVE managed at last to find my way to the Parish Church, which stands behind the stable-yard. The churchyard has two gates ; one for the Angels and the Aristocracy, opening into Sir James's garden, and the other for the miserable sinners and the vulgar, leading into a dirty, dark and closely walled-in lane. That sinners' narrow path leads ultimately to the village, which of old time used to nestle close up to its church, but which has, not long ago, been banished to the hidden valley three-quarters of a mile away adown the brook, around the exit of the mansion sewer. Sir James's Lady objects to seeing ragged villagers and their unpicturesque hovels and belongings from her windows, and, indeed, all things, which do not minister to My Lady's personal comfort, and so the church also, which she could not remove without considerable expense, has been cleverly hidden by high walls, tall shrubs and trees and ivy. The old peal of bells has been abolished, as they worried her nervous ladyship, but she has very generously hung up in the tower instead, two tinkling foreign bells, which only make a very modest little noise.

The Great House itself is as magnificent a palace as anyone could wish to have—who didn't care about comfort ; and since the place was given to him, Sir James has laid out £12,000 on new stables, and £2,500 on a quadrangle of kennels for his favourite dogs. He has also

spent altogether on the house of God, since he bought it for his nominee and became a worshipper there, upwards of £300, exclusive of £500, the cost of a gorgeous monument to the late Mr. Ichabod Lewis, his father-in-law.

I am twenty minutes too early, so I will sit down on this tumble-down old tomb-house and look as pleasant as I can at the usual dozen ploughboys, playing about the churchyard and tittering with half-audible sneers at the unusual stranger. They are eyeing me suspiciously, and at last boil over with collective contempt at my wearing in my poverty a flannel shirt, a common jacket, and brown leathern gaiters, on a Sunday, for I am one of those one-coated vagabonds who believe that God will listen to a man in 'working-dress' as well as if he had on 'Sunday-best.'

The owner of thousands of acres of land round here is the millionaire, Sir James Jones, who was once a penniless Welsh baronet. His father had for certain reasons lived in a quiet street in Boulogne, where he died just after his son came of age. Sir James the less was formerly in the army, where he lived, like his celebrated compatriot, Taffy, on his wits. At the age of twenty-four he suddenly retired in disgust, because, said he, 'there is no chance of a war to give a poor fellow a chance to get on.' It was confidentially understood, however, by the *habitués* of a certain club in London, that his resignation was more or less remotely connected with the accidental discovery of a mysterious intimacy existing between him and an irrepressible ace of spades.

Sir James then travelled abroad, staying a few weeks at most of the European cities frequented by strangers. He had nothing but his 'title,' a ten-pound note, his wits, a couple of diamond rings, and his debts when he started from England; he had not a penny of revenue from home whilst he was abroad, and yet for two years he lived and travelled more luxuriously than many a German prince. Strangely enough, he always paid his hotel bills without a murmur or a moment's hesitation, perhaps because he believed that a good hotel character is worth more than any other abroad. His title (he tried sincerely to stop republican *messieurs* from calling him 'Lor Jones') helped him into gambling *cercles* and other good society, and upon them he lived and thrived.

Happening to be in Naples for a short time, Sir James contrived one day to make the acquaintance of a Mr. Lewis, who was reported to be an immensely wealthy English Jew, travelling with his only daughter, Jochebed.

Now Sir James possessed, as we have seen, a title and some wits, but he also possessed, what is rarely a fortune for a man in the nineteenth century—a pretty face and figure.

He was a knave, but he was not a fool, and in a month he was conditionally engaged to the heiress of an English millionaire. I say 'conditionally,' because old Lewis said he must make inquiries when he got home, which Sir James assured him would be perfectly satisfactory. Old Lewis was a crafty man, and was so confident in his own knowledge of himself and men, that he could not suppose that a pretty and

apparently chivalrous youth could be as cunning as himself.

The three travelled to England together, and meantime Sir James improved the opportunity to make himself extremely agreeable to the fair and susceptible Jochebed. Although old Lewis never heard the whole truth, for young Jones was almost forgotten by his two years' absence, yet he heard enough to make him grumble a good deal and break off the engagement. But it was only broken a week; the old man, sordid though he was, loved his daughter dearly; she was infatuated; she was determined to have Sir James, who was quite equal to the occasion. The Jew was no match for his only child and her deep admirer; so, very shortly afterwards, Sir James Jones married Miss Lewis, and became Sir James Lewis-Jones.

You say—'But of course a millionairess could have married a duke if she had chosen, why didn't she do it?' Well, spoilt girls take strange fancies sometimes, you know, and besides, there was another little reason, which was known in 'society,' where, strangely enough, Miss Lewis was not. Her father had been a notorious money-lender; had been more or less connected with certain public trials and private suicides, and was playfully called by those whom he had shorn 'Old Shent-per-shent.' Although his name was now Lewis, it had once been Levi, for he was the son of old Samuel Levi, who had scraped together a hoard in a narrow street near the Strand, by selling questionable literature and buying dead men's and women's clothes. So, although Miss Lewis had a pedigree longer

than an English peer's—reaching back as it did to Levi the son of Levis *ad lib.* up to the original Fitz-Bar-Levi, who came over with Joshua the Conqueror—yet she was not yet received at Court and in society. You will note from this, what a very proper contempt all those presented at Court have for filthy lucre.

After all, old Lewis chuckled a good deal to his wrinkled self that his daughter was now a 'Lady' and entered in the peers' studbook, notwithstanding the World's sneers; so he determined, as he had plenty of money, to make his son-in-law, who was already nominally a county magnate, into a real magnate. He accordingly bought a huge new palace in the country (which, with Ichabod's assistance, had just ruined its builder, another *nouveau riche*), and seven thousand acres round it, for a very moderate sum. To round off the estate, he contrived to buy some six thousand acres more, but at a very high price. He thus, by great good luck, got together at once a 'ready-made place.'

All this he settled upon his son-in-law and daughter, and entailed upon his probable grandchild. A year later he died, in the sure and certain hope, from the assurances of his children, of the early advent of the necessary grandson. He consequently left all the remainder of his vilely-won wealth to his daughter—he still couldn't trust the son-in-law—and was buried in the chancel of yon church. That was thirty-three years ago, and that grandson isn't born yet; so the childless Sir James and Lady Jones enjoy all their riches and misery, unhampered by the restrictions of an 'unborn hand.'

The infirmest of the villagers, the first arrivals, are now slowly toddling into church, going past me like a broken procession of patients to an orthopedic hospital. Poor devils! how *very* poor they look. They are wearing the same 'Sunday clothes,' they wore up that same path twenty and thirty years ago. Thanks, however, to the Great Lady's solicitude for them, those weary, tottering, old legs must crawl three quarters of a wet mile to church, instead of a hundred yards as their forefathers did. It is positively painful to watch the pinched and haggard faces of those bent men and women. They may not have been sinless during their long servitude in the house of bondage, yet sure I am that the just God will take into account their seventy or eighty weary years of bitter misery, in passing judgment upon them. Saint Paul was saved, yet he never underwent greater temptation than those famishing wretches in front of me, when their own hunger and their starving children's bitter cry for bread almost goaded them to kill and raven on the pampered beasts, they tended for an idle Dives. Poor, simple fools! they fancy that coming to church to hear the Rich man's chaplain will enable them to pass through the needle's eye.

The 'little bell,' which tinkles during the five minutes before eleven, is going now, so I walk in and sit down next a very poor old lady, afflicted with 'Foot and Mouth Disease,' Palsy, Asthma, Distemper, and 'Stomach Staggers.' No sooner have I taken my seat, than the clerk—who gives me an impression that he tends the squire's swine on week-days—wobbles across to

me, and seeing I am a stranger and poorly clad, growls out, gruffly: 'You bean't to zit thur, thot's t' wimmin-volk's zide, Squire doan't 'llow on't.' Satisfied with my seat, I reply softly: 'then his keeper had better summon me for trespass.' The younger part of the congregation chuckles at the clerk's wrath; the older part shakes its grey head solemnly—quite shocked at my sin in sitting on the side set apart exclusively for women, a heinous offence in a country church. The clerk slinks off, muttering, to his heavy oak tub, into which he squeezes himself, and, for the parson, sits expectant.

The church is very old, very cold, very bare, and very musty inside. Its most brilliant ornament is the grotesque coat of arms of the old king, occupying its usual place over the chancel arch; somehow the life-size, sulky-looking lion seems to me very much like the shock-headed, coarse-mouthed clerk.

The bell, which is pulled by a blind and very aged labourer and a rattling rope mixed up with the school-children, now ceases. Then the ancient clock goes through two minutes of intense agony, during which its internal economy, its lungs, or pendulum, or something else inside it, buzzes forebodingly, like a fuse preparatory to a big blow-up, and finally explodes with eleven shocks. There is an uncomfortable stillness in the church for a minute, and then, as showing that all danger from the clock's paroxysm has passed away, it is a real relief to hear the pack of Sunday-school children whispering again, and dropping their dog's-eared hymn-books, and having their heads smacked by the schoolmistress.

The harmonium now begins to gurgle and buzz like the clock did, but its powder seems to be damp, for it doesn't go off satisfactorily at all. A minute later, the parson, 'a lean and slipper'd pantaloon,' clad in a cassock and short, white surplice, shuffles in from the vestry, and takes his place in another tub placed behind and rather above the clerk's.

The Reverend Phinehas Todins is a flaxen-bearded pharisee, with a benevolent and homely leer upon his sallow face. He is evidently a very 'umble man (to my lady) of fifty. He is the son of Sir James's lawyer-agent who lives over at Sopplebury, and who, when the living became vacant ten years ago, bargained with his client that he would manage to buy for him a 'Naboth's vineyard' mixed up with the park, if Sir James would give the living to his son. This compact was honourably carried out by both parties, and the reverend Phinehas—who aforetime was a sort of unattached preaching bagman cuckooing from temporarily unoccupied pulpits at a guinea a very dear sermon—was, with the permission of one parishioner, permanently quartered upon the rest for their spiritual welfare. Her ladyship likes him, the squire endures him, the poor fear him, the farmers loathe him, the young men curse him, and so the reverend Phinehas is happy. He has only nine children at present, and one wife.

The harmonium is quiet now, for its lady-gurgler and treadmiller, Miss Carissima Todins, is taking out some of its inside, perhaps to prepare another charge. We sit for several minutes, mentally criticising each other's bonnets, in

David Todins

Miss Carissima Todins

another silence, broken this time by two old men who are wheezing an instrumental duet, one performing on a diphtheritic throat, and the other on a muffled nose, until abruptly checked by the parson saying 'Sh——h,' which the clerk backs up by authoritatively shouting: 'Bide quiet thur.' The performers 'bide' a minute, and then encore.

It is now fourteen minutes past eleven, and, although a countryman, I am a little doubtful as to the cause of the delay in commencing service. It is however at last explained by the parson leaning over the edge of his tub, as if it were the bulwarks of a boat in a choppy sea, and saying to the clerk below (who is rather deaf) in a voice understood of the people: 'You had better go and inquire if Sir Jeames will honour us to-day.' The clerk stolidly stumps off to the mansion to ask. Another five minutes, which my neighbour occupies by a concentrated attack of asthma upon my outposts. Then the clerk's heavy hobnailed boots again grate up the bare stone aisle, and he shambles across to the parson's tub, before which he tugs his forelock in sign of submission, and then whispers hoarsely, amidst the deepest attention of the whole of the congregation: 'Squire zends wurd as you bean't to wayt no vurdur for 'E; E's akummin prezunt.' The considerate parson, however, does wait three or four minutes 'further,' and then at twenty-two minutes past the appointed hour, he startles us by commencing to whine the service in his usual 'umble manner.

In the middle of the 'absolution,' whilst all the people are kneeling and the palsied paupers

are groaning in spirit—the squire and his wife bustle in, making as much rustle with my lady's thick silk dress as possible, and taking five minutes to settle, during which they quarrel with the maid and themselves out loud about the hassocks. The instant they entered the door, all the household servants, including several powdered footmen in 'canary' liveries, rose from their mats and gravely stood at 'attention' in their places, until the last rustle of my lady's dress had died away amongst the velvet pillows; then, at a signal from the greasy house-steward, those independent flunkeys simultaneously sink down on to their knees and—yawn. The school-children merely rose up and 'curtchied,' whilst the rest of the worshippers discourteously knelt on or pulled their forelocks.

The squire being present to-day, the anthem cometh off as directed in the rubric: 'for squires and places where they sing, here followeth the anthem.' It is wailed by a dozen young and grey men and elderly maids, whose colds seem to have banished their tune and time as well as their taste. It is a lugubrious dirge, in words, I formerly understood to be indicative of exuberant joy.

Mr. Todins is a great duck farmer during the week, for the sake of his large family, and he feeds and tends his paying pets himself. His paws are large and rather rawbeefy, and the finest finger is the middle one of the right hand which has lost its nail, and is consequently the safest for pushing sop down ducklings' throats.

Her ladyship is suffering from a high church fever just now, so the parson performs sundry

grotesque antics, under the impression that he is doing the rabid ritualist. He frequently turns about, and bows, and crosses his forehead and surplice with the longest finger of his red right hand.

Whenever it is the clerk's turn to respond in the duet, he seems to strain every vein to drown whatever the parson and the people may be gabbling, by a succession of incoherent grunts and groans, out of which proceed sometimes sundry very broad Saxon sentences.

I should mention that my lady wanted to abolish the clerk years ago, as being old-fashioned and low church, but the Squire, having a little nonconformist Welsh blood in him, and liking to annoy his lady rather than not, refused to permit the innovation.

When Sir James chooses to stand up, which is not often, he leans on the high oak screen which shields his pew from the vulgar gaze, and picks his teeth, gapes, mutters, and stares about alternately. He is now about sixty, and still has what many people would call a good-looking face, but his narrow jaws, and pointed light brown beard, and foxy eyes very close together, do not assure me of his trustworthiness. His wife has much iron-grey hair, small brown-black eyes, an unmistakably Jewish nose, and pointed chin. She has on very costly jewellery and a disappointed, soured, and yet weak countenance. She and her husband quarrel like cats, but they don't separate, because they both love money better than anything else, and owing to the peculiar nature of their settlements, they cannot very well get on without each other. Sir James spends most of his time and much of his wife's

money, on his niece 'Daisy,' a pretty grass-widow, and the jealous Lady Jones's hated and successful rival. He is also a county M.P. and a carpet-colonel of yeomanry, in the rare intervals when he is not monopolised by his temporary Daisy.

In a niche, on my right, is a beautiful kneeling figure in pure white marble of an æsthetic maiden with wings expanded imppr. weeping into, or washing her face in, a tea-urn, from which hangs a Turkish towel or a roll of tripe. It worries me to wonder how the young lady can change her closely-fitting surplice without first unscrewing her wings. These touching and appropriate emblems were put up by Lady Jones to the memory of her dear dead father—Ichabod, the extortioner.

Sundry paper texts in large red and tinfoil letters on a white ground are disposed around the church. Twining round the pillar at Sir James's elbow is, curiously enough, the first commandment staring at the congregation with the squire. This seems a very suitable arrangement, for though this is the House of God, the squire is much the most important in it to the congregation, every one of whom—from the Scotch steward, planning over future perquisites, down to old 'Guster Tibbetts, the hag who looks after the groom-boys' barrack—depends on the goodwill of the great Sir James.

I refrain from remarking upon the matter of the service, which however strongly invited criticism. I was glad when the prayers were over, and we got ready for the sermon by singing a hymn, in which the cold-afflicted choir assured me

repeatedly that they were suffering acutely from 'All-rapture-through-and-through',—an ailment I had never heard of before. Not a soul in the church pays the least attention to the *meaning* of the prayers, for the only really devout people, the poor old 'miserable sinners,' cannot read and cannot hear them, for they are gabbled through in a sort of 'go-as-you-please' race; even if they heard them, they could not understand the obsolete phrases, of which some people are so proud. Everybody, however, pays very particular attention to the forms and ceremonies and 'music.'

The sermon now follows from the text: 'How shall they preach except they be sent?' This is the tirade which the reverend Todins trots out regularly on the Sunday next before the periodic grand field-day of the dissenters in the neighbouring market town of Sopplebury, when they meet together for a Sunday of sermons and gnashings of teeth and wailings. Mr. Todins always seizes this opportunity to show that any backslider of his parish, who might attend the dissenting service, would be inexorably punished by Providence, on earth by being discharged from service on the squire's estate, and hereafter by being sent to hell without appeal. And then he describes hell minutely, like a practised guide.

It is, of course, extremely easy for him to prove that he himself is 'sent,' and that no dissenting preacher could possibly be 'sent,' because the latter is a dissenter, and hasn't been to Oxford, and doesn't receive tithes, and doesn't write to the bishop, and isn't visited by the

squire. So, after half an hour of these threats and unanswerable arguments, the poor frightened old labourers, who sit there with their mouths open and their eyes staring at the speaker, would as soon drown themselves as 'go to meetin'.'

The sermon is over, and we are afflicted with another hymn, during which a collection for the 'sick and needy' takes place. The irrepressible clerk stumps up to the chancel and hands the salver, graven with my lady's crest, to the parson's family, who, severally, from Mrs. Todins down to the youngest needy school-boy, rattle in a heavy silver coin. As the churchwardens are not permitted to have a word or a finger in anything to do with the parish or the parson or his doings—it is just possible that those heavy dollars, so charitably given out of Mrs. Todins's pocket, may find their way back (after they have been heard and seen by the rest of the congregation) into the poor and needy Mrs. Todins's family purse. After pulling his forelock twice to Sir James and Jochebed, who give him two half-sovereigns, the ponderous clerk waddles down to the vulgar part of the church. Here he pushes the plate under all but the very poorest noses and leaves it there a moment. When he comes to me, I decline to give him anything, at which, however, he doesn't seem surprised, and on he goes. The poor old body next me looks so wretched and forlorn, that I am weak enough to slip a shilling into her palsied paw. She glares at it, turns it over, spits on it for luck, clutches it greedily for safety, and then curtsies crazily, and whines and waters

out 'God *bless* y' me son'—which heartfelt extempore prayer somehow does me more good than all the previous dervish-like repetitions of the authorised version.

The last prayer has been gabbled, and we are standing up, as I suppose, to walk out. Just as I step towards the plebeians' door, the clerk rushes out of his tub at me, holding up his red fist and shouting hoarsely: 'Hsh——h, Bide wur yer be till t' Squire's gone hout,' so, out of curiosity, I bide to see what happens. Accordingly the parson and all the other worshippers stand patiently in their places for four minutes, while my Lady's maid muffles up my Lady Jones in sundry sables. Then, after Sir James and his haughty dame have stalked majestically out of their exclusive door, we Commons hustle out, as if we were rushing across to the House of Lords to dish up the Sunday dinner of fried pig's giblets or mashed cabbage and potatoes.

On sauntering round the churchyard and getting to the other side of the church, I behold the parson, his wife (who has an impediment in her walk and talk), and five out of their nine children, hurrying into the squire's garden to lick over my Lady Jones, as to the manner born.

Mrs. Todins generally wheedles what she wants out of the wealthy woman, who is too silly or too nervous to shake off the crafty parasite. All of Mr. Todins's children born since he obtained the living have Lady Jones for godmother; and the two girls out of the five god-children are both appropriately named Jochebed. My Lady also kindly pays for the expensive schooling of Master Todins senior and of two of his sisters,

whilst the whole tribe batten on the overgrowth of the kitchen garden.

So you see that that excellent wife and mother, the sensible Mrs. Todins, is quite justified in truckling to My Lady, for she squeezes probably over two hundred pounds'-worth of perquisites a year out of old Ichabod's blood-money-bag—no mean consideration to a hungry parson's family.

THE FARM-LABOURER.

THE PAY OF AN ADULT MALE FARM-LABOURER
THROUGHOUT THREE - FOURTHS OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM AVERAGES TWENTY-THREE PENCE PER
DAY.

'Attend all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise' and 'Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' that fact, and this with it: A man, his wife, and children, who earn and exist on twenty-three pence per day *between* them, are *not* 'Paupers,' and yet, excluding such, *one person out of every twenty-seven in the British Islands is a state-supported pauper.*

Here's a riddle for you: How many Millions of men, women, and children, out of our Thirty-seven millions, live on less than one shilling and eleven pence a day, or £35 a year, each?

We boast that we are the Greatest, the Wealthiest, and the Free-est Nation, that the world has ever seen, and we repeat *ad nauseam* in our chief 'national hymn' that 'Britons

never will be slaves.' Away with such lying brag and senseless songs! Away with them! Let us rather blush with national shame, and cover our base heads with ashes, if we cannot wipe out these hideous facts.

'Is our Civilisation a Failure?' Yes, emphatically—yes,—seeing that the climax of a thousand years of civil 'progress' professedly for the Commonwealth in our land, is seen in her soil seized by seven thousand spoilers and tilled by their serfs—her starving sons.

The farm-labourer is usually born in a more or less waterproof ~~hovel~~ ^{noel}, containing from one room upwards, although I have known of his coming into the world under a hedge, after troubling his mother toiling in the field. The little one lives entirely on his mother for many months, sometimes until he can toddle across the croft and ask plainly for her life-blood. Forgetting her wan, wasted body, she says, with a little sad unconscious sigh, 'it don't cost anything to feed the boy that way.'

She cannot buy a cupful of milk, you know, although she milks the cows, and she dare not take it, for her master does not believe that his Creator said, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn' to him. So you see that it is much cheaper to feed the child on her own flesh and blood, and so save the pence to buy bread for her half-fed husband.

The mother gets up at five or half-past every morning, and works without ceasing, at home or in the field, until bedtime at nine—fifteen hours, fed on bread and potatoes, cabbage and fat. The baby keeps her awake and sorely

tried and tired most of the night, and for twelve long years she will give up a large part of her scanty share of bread to strengthen his hungry little body, whilst she weakens and wears out her own. Think a moment,—Isn't that mother's love for the thankless child upon whom she is wasting her life, more real, more lasting, than any you have ever felt? Conscience isn't strong enough; it *must* be love alone, which stops her from 'taking and dashing her little ones against the stones.' But the labourer's wife is hardly ever found with only one child—that is a luxury reserved for the rich; she generally has from five to ten.

After he is weaned, the little boy brings up himself. He wanders about with three or four other tiny mites, sometimes up to the village school to roll about in the dust until the older ones come out; sometimes down to the shallow brook into which he tumbles and crawls out of, to run himself dry in twenty minutes, after sweet cowslips; sometimes along the crooked lane to get stung all over his naked, sunburnt legs and arms and neck, with nettles, whilst he fills himself up with bramble berries.

He likes the haymaking time best, in the sunny June. He has never had a bought toy or a picture-book in his little life, yet how intensely happy he is, romping about with other urchins amongst the hay. He tosses sturdy little armfuls of withering cocksfoot and meadow-fescue, and bunches of buttercups and crazies, over the other mites. How he 'chortles in his joy!' And then he sucks a fresh red and green field-sorrel, and after that he is so

thirsty, he must ramble off under the old elm-trees to find the finest hemlock stem, which he bites off 'short' with his vicious little 'toosens,' and then down to the rippling brook to suck up, through that stem, such long, narrow streams of what he is sure is the coolest and freshest water in all the world. He laughs and plays himself tired, but by and by, he spies such a—oh, *such* a pretty, yellow frog, which hops away, and he after it, squeaking with joy. Then the frog stops, frightened and swelling; he *must* pinch it, just once. Oh, how nasty and cold it is! Quick! 'Gyp,' the grinning sheep-dog, has found a grass-mouse's hole, and they all squat round, impatiently watching the panting 'pup' snorting, and tearing away the turf-tufts with his sharp, white teeth. At last he's got to them; a little squeak, and Gyp kills, and licks once and then leaves the mother-mouse, while *he* may have one of the four dear little tiny mousies all to himself—oh, *so* soft and tame. Listen! one of the mowers has found a lark's nest, so off he scuttles, and annexes one of the smooth, speckled eggs, and he looks up straight at the frightened lark twittering towards the sun above his head; he sneezes his little body off the grass, rubs his blinking eyes with his puny fist, and then runs after a white butterfly.

He doesn't like the corn-harvest so well, because the stubbles scratch his chubby legs, and make them bleed, and they get so sore at night; and the red 'harvest-bugs,' which are too small to see, bite him all over and tease him dreadfully.

It is a great treat for him to run behind his

father down to the farm-yard to see the ponderous, hairy-legged cart-horses start out to work at seven. He loves those horses already, and isn't a bit afraid of them; but he trembles with fright when the great gobbler turkey struts up, and gobbles, and 'gets all red over his head, and puts out his feathers at him.' Then the snappish farmer's son drives him out of the yard, and he sobs bitterly, until, through his hot tears, he catches sight of Gyp's mother, 'Bess,' the blue-haired, bob-tailed, old sheep-dog, as thin as a toast-rack. His grief has gone instantly, and, with the tattered skirt of his absurd frocklet shaking from side to side, he follows the bow-wow as fast as he can run and tumble over, through the hare's pass in the hedge, and down into the field where the lambs are. Here he walks up threateningly to the understanding dog, sitting up on her haunches, and demands in broken Saxon why she didn't wait for him, and the 'bow-wow' answers by licking his face all over and pawing off his hat.

His misery is a winter after the first day's snow. The novelty has worn off, and it is so cold and wet. The poor little bairn has only one pair of boots in the world; they cost three shillings last harvest, and are stiff and thick. But they are worn out now at the tips, and his tiny red toes peep through the sodden socks. His feet are swollen with chilblains, and it makes him cry a little every morning in the candle-light to push his chapped heels right down into the hard, shrunken boots. His clothes, too, are of very poor, patched stuff. He hasn't enough on either the inside or the outside of his

shivering little body. The flimsy socks fall down over his boots, and his legs are bare and blue and red and rough. But his head is pretty warm, for his Maker has given him a thick mat of rough auburn hair. The front of his neck is rather cold, and the bleak north-east wind *will* blow down inside the top of his loose frock-body and make his tiny stomach shudder, as he gasps for breath through his chattering teeth. Buy him a hap'orth of sweets, and watch him 'scrump' them up, and you will see more genuine joy than you will see at a great duke's wedding.

Tired and footsore and very hungry, with his red legs 'spreethed,' and scratched with cruel briars, the independent urchin finds his way home at last, at some time or other, and is instantly appeased and perfectly happy with a chunk of bread smeared with a lick of dripping, and a sup of weak, milkless tea. His large blue eyes seem joyful enough at meal-times, although they look strangely sad at some other seasons.

Curiously enough, these half-fed country children, who have nobody to look after them in their ramblings and doings, seldom die; 'God *does* temper the wind to the shorn lamb.'

If there is an infant-school near, the child is often sent there some time before he can learn anything, so as to be out of his tired mother's way for a few hours. The boy continues at school, now, until he is past twelve, thanks to the Education Act. Formerly, he went to work almost as soon as he could walk, and, perhaps, never had a day's 'schooling' in

his life. Now he may not work before he is twelve, except in the holidays at harvest-time, when he earns his boots for next half-year or year, by gleaning wheat or by looking after young pigs on the barley stubbles.

At thirteen, he goes regularly to work, at fourpence or sixpence per day. Perhaps he starts by scaring rooks from the corn, or tending sheep or pigs on the breezy downs or in the fields, but he generally begins as a stable-boy, leading the horses for the grown-up ploughboys and men. It is very strange that these ploughboys meet with so few accidents with cart-horses. Perhaps it is because the powerful brutes seldom move out of a stolid walk, and so get lazy and abnormally tame. It is a common thing to see a little lad of fourteen leading and guiding two or three huge horses, drawing a waggon-load of wheat or hay along rough; narrow lanes, and even through awkward gateways. Each of those horses weighs more than twenty times as much as his plucky little driver, who often passes between the massive legs to hitch or unhitch a hook.

The boy may go with horses, ploughing and sowing and reaping and mowing all his life, or he may change his profession to that of a shepherd or cowman, or he may become a general labourer, turning his hand to any kind of farm work. His pay increases annually until he is twenty or twenty-two, when he gets adult's wages.

It is frequently said that the farm hand is so badly paid because he cannot do 'skilled'

work. But a man who can mow an acre with a scythe one day, plough an acre well the next, and drive and keep in order a reaping-machine the next day, surely exercises as much skill as a nonagenarian bishop, or a 'fourth gentleman Usher of Her Majesty's privy chamber in ordinary'—each of whom, I believe, is paid by the nation more than one and elevenpence a day.

The ploughboy must feed his horses at five o'clock, so that they may go out at seven. If you have not tried it, you can form no idea of the intense misery of getting up by lantern light at four on a February morning, and trudging a mile to work, through slush and sleet, in the lonely darkness. The ploughman drives his horses from seven until four, when they return to the stable—nine hours' walking fieldwork, during which he is not supposed to cease for more than twenty minutes altogether for lunch, &c., or the horses would waste time and catch cold. So he dines late at five or six, off bread and cabbage and potatoes, with dripping or a scrap of bacon fried over them, and a quart or so of weak tea.

The shepherd lad in winter has a rough time. He has to trim frozen turnips with his hands, and wade about all day—sometimes up to his knees in snow or mud—feeding and hurdling disgustingly dirty sheep. He and the cowman have of course to work on Sundays as well as weekdays.

Up till the last few years, a labourer often attained his majority without ever having been more than ten miles from his birthplace. Per-

haps he had never seen a railway train. Even now, he has never seen a pantomime in his life. But the description of the sea is the greatest puzzle to him. He has seen a brook and knows what a river is, and he hears there are thousands of rivers all flowing into the sea. Then says he: 'How is it the zea doesn't get villed up an' vlow over the sides, an' why is it as the bruk, which has good sweet wauter to drink in the milkin' cows' meadow yonder, gets salty as soon as it gets to the zea, thot beats I.' If he is born on a black or red soil, he is slow to believe that there are other districts with white chalk lands.

The idea of London still appals the *very* old labourer. He fancies somehow that the Queen sits on a golden throne in the middle of it (somewhere, I suppose, near the 'Seven Dials'), guarded by a bloodthirsty giant—the Duke of Wellington or his son—and hosts of gamekeepers and militia and policemen, whilst numberless 'furrin' prisoners are shot close by. But since the Education Act was passed and newspapers became cheap, the young labourer has begun to be quite wideawake, and he now knows a thing or two. He gets fidgety about staying at home, and really understands something about 'Parlimunt an' Blues an' Yallors an' them Irish fellers as have shot or drove off all the squires an' don't pay no more rent now.'

Try to fancy to yourself the dreary monotony of a labourer's life. He sees nobody but the few other dull souls in his parish, who were all born and bred up there as he was, and

therefore can tell him nothing about the mighty world away. His one yearly festival is the Foresters' 'feet,' or his benefit-club dinner and drunk, although he may be so fortunate as to get a back seat at the concert of classical music got up by the parson's wife. There is no cheap music-hall to go to, and he cannot drink and drown his hunger and despair at the public-house, except at rare intervals, because he has no money to do it with, and because the parson and the squire would drive him out of the parish if they heard of his entering the 'Tally-Ho.' I hear you say: 'And a very good thing too for himself and neighbours that he is thus kept away from drink.' Yes, so it is; but I dare to tell you, that if you—you who can reason and compare—lived that man's life, *you* could not be kept away from the public-house—or the mad-house. I know well what an awful curse drunkenness is to England, yet I venture to say that the wonder is, not that English labourers drink so much, but that they do not drink more. Yes, it is the hideous truth, that the only way sometimes for a thinking serf, forced to live on elevenpence a day for fifty years—to carry himself from misery to dreamy happiness—is—to *drink*.

The labourer marries when he is about twenty-four, or as soon as he can beg a cottage. His wife is probably one of the maids at the rectory, or the dairymaid or general servant at a farmhouse in the parish or the next one. His courtship is a very tedious and tame business, but he keeps to his wife when he has got one, and hardly

ever kicks or thrashes her. They love each other with a quaint, phlegmatic steadfastness, and are happy in their homely way. The young wife does not complain, but she often yearns in her inmost inside for the fresh meat and good food, she used to get in the kitchen when in service; but she hadn't a husband then, and she comforts herself by thinking that—well—one can't have everything.

Let us take for an instance an able-bodied young man, settled down in a remote and lonely cottage in the Midlands, with a weakly wife and five children, the eldest boy eight years old and the youngest 'in arms.' This is a commonly-occurring case, and may be taken as a typical one.

The man's regular wages average twelve shillings a week throughout the year, but he makes nearly four pounds extra by 'piece' and harvest work. His total earnings are thus about 13s. 6d. per week, or twenty-three pence per day. His wife cannot go out to work, as she must look after the five children and see to the cottage and the food, and the eldest child is not yet old enough to earn anything.

So a sum of one shilling and elevenpence per day has to feed, clothe, and lodge seven souls. You say that that is impossible, but I can assure you that a labourer who has never had a day's 'schooling' in his life, beyond the bitter teaching of want, can solve that problem, although a 'first wrangler' could not.

Here's a summary of the *weekly* expenditure averaged from a great many data obtained by

myself from labourers, relieving officers, shopkeepers, dissenting and other parsons, and others :—

| | s. | d. |
|---|-------|----|
| Hovel and allotment rent | 1 | 0 |
| Bread | 3 | 8 |
| Coal and wood | 1 | 2 |
| Potatoes and cabbage (from allotment) .. | 0 | 0 |
| Total for meat of all kinds (bacon), dripping, lard, cheese, or butter | 3 | 0 |
| Tea, 6d.; sugar, 8d. | 1 | 2 |
| Light, 6d.; salt, soap and other groceries, 5d. | 0 | 11 |
| School for three children | 0 | 5 |
| Benefit society and club | 0 | 5 |
| Boots and clothes | 1 | 6 |
| Sundries | 0 | 3 |
| | <hr/> | |
| | 13 | 6 |

You will note that these English labourers, who grow beef and mutton for you and me, cannot have any fresh meat or milk or butter for themselves or their little ones. There are very few villages where fresh milk can be bought in *small* quantities.

You say that eighteenpence a week or four pounds a year—the price of a jacket in Bond Street—cannot be nearly enough to clothe seven people. You are quite right; it is *not* nearly enough, but it is all that the poor, shivering creatures can afford for that purpose; and this is how they contrive to divide it, so as to make it go round. Boots are the chief expense. A man will wear out one pair in twelve months, costing, say, 14s.; four out of his five children will each wear out a pair and a half in twelve months, varying in price from 2s. 6d. to 7s. per pair, say, £1. 7s.; one pair of corduroy trousers,

costing 9s., will last a man two years with patching, 4s. 6d.; man's other clothes for the year, 6s.; woman's boots and children's other clothes, £1; sundries, 6s. 6d.; making a total of £3. 18s.

As a rule, the woman spends hardly anything on her own dress, until her eldest child can earn something. Meanwhile, she dresses in the rags remaining over from the good clothes she wore and saved up during her domestic service.

The man, before his marriage, should have saved up enough to scantily furnish the little cottage, for he cannot devote anything for that purpose out of his weekly wages afterwards, without stinting himself and family of the daily allowance of bread. Of course he cannot put by anything, literally, for a rainy day, until his sons and daughters can earn something appreciable and help him.

‘What a fool he must be to marry then’; yes, sensible Sir, but human weakness will last as long as the human race. Did it ever strike you that if no improvident marriages had ever been made, the earth would have become depopulated ages ago?

Labourers look forward to the workhouse as the natural place for them to retire to, when their strength has gone from them. Indeed, they have no alternative, unless a child can afford to keep them. There is no anxiety as to getting fed and clothed in the workhouse, as there was when they were in daily work; but they have three very great objections to the union, and these three make them bitterly dread

the day when they must be shut up in its gloomy walls. The first is the disgrace of seeking parish relief. That, you say, is merely a sentimental grievance, and that a rough labourer would not really feel it; but, though trodden down for generations, labourers still have a little unconquerable pride: the same pride that has made them fight like heroes for the country that has crushed their fathers, makes them shun the workhouse. The second objection is to the prison-like discipline to which they are subjected, and the third and greatest grievance is the law by which a man and wife under sixty are separated from each other.

If it were not for these, many infirm and aged labourers would not mind the poor-house so much, for they would probably be better fed there than if they fed themselves, although the workhouse diet is not remarkable for the variety and abundance of its dishes. Perhaps you would like to know what an indoor pauper thrives upon, so I will give you his fare for the weekly feast-day, Sunday, copied exactly from the printed dietary of an English country workhouse, now lying in front of me. For a man, seven ounces of bread and a pint and a half of gruel for breakfast; seven ounces of bread and an ounce and a half of cheese for dinner, and seven ounces of bread and an ounce and a half of cheese for supper; in all three meals, and as much cold water as he likes. His wife, separated from him, would enjoy the same food, but six ounces of bread instead of seven, and an ounce of cheese instead of an ounce and a half.

The parson who pronounced the solemn

exhortation at the altar, when he married John and Mary, 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder'—is often a 'Guardian of the poor,' and, perhaps, at the board meeting held a few years later at the workhouse, will decree, with an easy conscience, that John and Mary—who have nothing in the world left but each other's love—are to be separated and to dwell apart again.

Some old men and women who can find a lodging in their children's already overcrowded cottages, can get 'out-door relief' from their parishes without entering the workhouse itself. Their allowance then, upon which they are supposed to live, amounts to two loaves and one shilling or even two shillings a week apiece.

Labourers are often obliged to live a long way from their work, sometimes three miles and even more, and they must trudge these weary miles backwards and forwards, night and morning, in their own time, so as not to encroach on the hours due to the master. The way often lies through rough, muddy lanes, and in winter their only pair of boots are frequently wet through all day. Just calculate the crass stupidity of the farmer, who thus knowingly wastes the 'energy of his machine!'

The ordinary form of village government is that of an irresponsible, lifehold, hermaphrodite duumvirate. The governed have no voice whatever in the appointment of their two irremovable governors, or rather governess and governor,—the squire's wife and the parson—hence, as you would suppose, the subjects are ground down by a prying, capricious tyranny.

If a young man, with a manly spirit and an empty body tired of bread and lard, one evening on his way from work, knocks down a rabbit in his path and takes it home to eat, he will probably be banished from his father's roof, and the parson will warn the poor old parents that they also will have to quit their cottage, if their sinful son sets foot in it again. So that son, 'the pick of the parish' and the realest man in it, is forced to emigrate or go into the mines or mighty cities, to wait, a latent revolutionist, for his revenge at some future hungry time.

If a pretty little village girl of seventeen, who has never been five miles away from home before, is suddenly pitchforked by My Lady into London service, and returns to her father's cottage-door, a year later, with a broken heart and a hungry baby—she and all her father's house are instantly cast out of the spotless parish as unclean, by the immaculate parson. The father and mother, too disgraced and old and sad to work elsewhere, gravitate slowly and surely into the workhouse, whilst the wretched girl, 'more sinned against than sinning,' takes one of the only two courses open to her—she drowns herself and baby in the millpond, or hides herself for ever from her family in the streets of London.

'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.'

Thus of old time did the Almighty God, to whom vengeance belongeth, curse the professed expounders of His commandments; and thus

damns He now the lying priests, who preach but practise not His law of mercy.

A 'serf' is literally a slave attached to the soil and sold with it. Now, an old married man, who is discharged from work in a parish in which he was born and bred, and to whose manner of work he is alone accustomed, is almost certainly ruined by being driven out to seek bread elsewhere. Many such a man has been thus cast out for some trivial offence, perhaps for not touching his hat to the parson's wife, and I believe that 'serf' is a more fitting name for him than 'labourer.' 'But a wronged man can appeal to the just laws of England'—say you. 'No, he can't, if he's a country pauper'—say I. I may add that when the 'just laws' are invoked against the labourer by the squire or the parson, those laws are administered by magistrates, who are the interested friends and neighbours of that squire and parson, often acting on information privately supplied by the good squire himself.

Hear what comfortable words, Fawcett—the Postmaster-General and the most celebrated professor of political economy in the empire, and who died the other day—said of the farm-labourers in the South and West of England: 'Theirs is a life of incessant toil for wages too scanty to give them a sufficient supply even of the first necessities of life. No hope cheers their monotonous career: a life of constant labour brings them no other prospect than that, when their strength is exhausted, they must crave as suppliant mendicants a pittance from parish relief.'

But, you say, I have omitted to add the

public and private charities to the labourer's revenue. I solemnly believe that those alms have done more to sap the labourer's independence and to reduce him to beggary, than any other cause, except the land-laws and the want of education.

Such 'charities' are, frequently, only bounties to the labourer's employer—the farmer. I will give you an instance. I knew a benevolent landlady, who distributed free milk and soup regularly to the poor labourers on her estate. She continued this practice for years, yet she never heard until I told her, and proved my statement to be true, that those labourers were paid by the farmers a shilling a fortnight less than their fellow-workmen on neighbouring estates, which shilling into the farmer's pocket was, of course, the market value of the milk and soup and supposition that the charitable land-owner would help her *protégés* still more if they fell ill.

Labourers don't want charity and dependence; they want work, its fair value, and independence.

But, you say, there is not work for them in England, so they must either emigrate or be kept by others. Not work for them in England! ? Come with me, and to-morrow I can show you tens of thousands of acres of fertile land lying waste and uncultivated within *fifty* miles of London and its four million food-consumers, forced to buy corn and meat from the other side of the world. Here are the thousands of half-fed labourers in enforced idleness lacking only land to labour on, and there are within sight of

them the tens of thousands of acres also in enforced idleness lacking only labourers. What keeps them apart? Why our monstrous land-laws!

Why should you force your fellow-countryman to emigrate? Hasn't he as much right to live on the land God gave him as you have? I will *not* believe that God ever yet made a man in a fruitful land, meaning him to leave that land untilled, and so forcing him to famish or eat the bitter bread of banishment.

I have known the slave in the Southern States of America, and I dare to say that his life was an easier one than that of the English serf. The negro was far too valuable a possession to be ill-treated by his owner. The English squire does not ill-treat a thousand-guinea race-horse by which he may make money; on the contrary, he treats him as tenderly as his own child; whilst the labourer, who is not actually his property, would occasion him no loss if he starved and died under the park wall. The American slave lived in a climate that was a paradise to him; so long as he was willing to work at agreeable labour, he was well fed. He had no anxiety about food for his own or his children's bodies. He was naturally of a cheery disposition, and had many cheery fellow-workmen. Perhaps you will believe the writer of what you have already read in this tract, when he assures you that he is no advocate for slavery. The fact of being another man's chattel would, of course, far outweigh all possible advantages that a man might have in return. I have merely compared the daily lives of the American slave

and the English serf, apart altogether from abstract questions of right and wrong.

And what are the causes of this abasement of the farm-labourer? The *Land-laws*, which have robbed him of his birthright—the right of every man born into the world to sow and reap for himself that he may live.

And what is the remedy? Let him have a loud voice amongst the law-makers of his Fatherland.

A RUSTIC REVOLUTIONIST.

You smile at the idea that a real 'red' Revolutionist could have been born, not many years ago, in a sleepy hamlet in the midst of pastoral peace, far away from even a little town, and many miles from a railway, in the West of England; yet I really believe that such a thing did happen. It is at least possible, and there is more than one precedent for such an extraordinary phenomenon—for were not Robespierre, Danton, Marat, St. Just, Couthon, Carrier, and indeed all the most bloodthirsty leaders of the French Revolution, born in the quiet country, far away from the Capital where they afterwards set up a bloody axe to fright the world?

I lit upon the prodigy in this wise. Some time ago, I came by accident to know a well-to-do American merchant in a large interior city of the 'States.' He was of English extraction and

took a keen interest in British politics. We often talked over these matters, and at last he seemed to have come to the conclusion that I was not an infatuated worshipper of my mother-country's laws and institutions. Thinking thus, he abruptly asked me one day if I would like to interview a young English friend of his, whom he enthusiastically called 'the cutest cuss of a real A 1 go-ahead nineteen-knot copper-keeled clipper-built rebel that he had ever happened on ; he guessed *he* would politiccate some to me.' Choking down my first fears, I assured him that I should be charmed to meet this many-virtued monster.

Three days later, after I had solemnly promised never to divulge certain immaterial particulars, I was duly introduced to the dangerous one, whom I will call 'Smith.'

Strangely enough, I was not frightened at his appearance, which, however, was certainly not prepossessing. There was something 'uncanny' about the man. He was about 35, and rather above medium height, with a large, square-shaped head ; thick, firm neck ; huge shoulders ; lean waist ; strong, brown hands, and short, wide feet. His brown hair was coarse, long, and unkempt ; the forelock falling over a broad, trouble-lined forehead and rugged eyebrows. His keen, steel-blue eyes, placed wide apart and rather deep in the head, possessed at times a singularly malignant expression. The face was clean shaven, except a stubbly moustache. Cheeks slightly sunken, but the jaws strong, broad, and obstinate-looking. Mouth, by no means harsh, but rarely relapsing into a smile,

and the nose broad and slightly aquiline. There was something attractive about the voice, which was deep, sonorous, and emotional.

My new acquaintance was poorly and negligently dressed in a coarse flannel shirt, brown jacket, and very wide trousers, supported by a French navvy's *ceinture* wrapped round and round the waist. He wore no ornaments, unless you call a dull-black iron watch-chain an ornament.

I should not have troubled you with this long description of a man, who was either a criminal or a madman, if I had not been afterwards assured by a notorious apostle of liberty in Paris, that Smith was a most fearless and powerful member of one of those large semi-secret societies, which have been lately organised for treasonable purposes in most monarchical countries. It is just possible, therefore, that Smith may appear on the surface in England some day—though, should he so appear, it will probably be on a scaffold, or blindfolded against a barrack-wall, with half-a-dozen bullets in his heart.

We soon trusted each other, and he volunteered certain personal details about his past life. He was the only child of a small hard-working tenant-farmer, in a secluded part of the West of England. He was about sixteen when his father died, leaving a widow, who was then ejected from the little farm without compensation by a great landowner, as she could not vote at a county election. By stinting himself, the father had managed to give his son a really sound education, keeping him at school until he

was suddenly called away to work for his own and his widowed mother's support. After many disappointments, he succeeded in getting into a country newspaper office, where he remained—although constantly disagreeing with his employers—until he was nineteen, when his mother died of want, and vexation at having been ruined by the ejectment from the old home. Only half-fed himself, the boy prayed aloud over his mother's open grave that God would let him be the instrument of that vengeance, which he felt sure would some day fall upon those who had wronged the helpless widow.

Shunned by the timid country people as a sullen ne'er-do-weel, he sold the few chattels left to him, and started for London. Here he worked at many things until he again got on a small newspaper, but not being permitted to give vent to his uncompromising opinions, he left that place in disgust. After another period of vagabondage, he was glad to become an insignificant reporter on a larger journal. It was his duty to gather up the details of suicides, accidents, and other horrors, and he was naturally in constant contact with the poorest population of the mighty city. The hideous and heartrending sights, the woful misery, the grim despair, the ghastly poverty, the reckless sin, that daily came before him in the squalid courts and alleys, contrasted with the glittering splendour of the shops almost next door, and the extravagant luxury and thoughtless waste of the wealthy ones, whose palaces and carriages he constantly passed—caused his somewhat morbid mind to brood over the inordinate

difference separating those who have, from those who have not.

He had suffered a little himself, and his heart yearned with an intense sympathy for his fellow-sufferers, whilst he could not suppress a jealous hate for those proud idlers wasting enormous wealth which they had never won. After painfully pondering over this problem for many months, and finding himself unable to solve it, he gradually sank into a sort of callous despair.

‘But a sudden change came o’er his mind’—one day. He asked himself—who fixed this great gulf betwixt the rich and the poor? They could not have fixed it themselves, for it was obviously impossible that the majority could have agreed to keep nothing, whilst they allowed the minority to have everything. Then it must have been arranged by some higher power controlling all. Yet he was sure that the Creator, the God of the Bible, ‘Who had created all men equal,’ had never intended it. Then it could only have been done by the only other superior power—the Government. But both the Rich and the Poor chose the Government? No. Emphatically No. The Rich alone, having duped the small fraction of the Poor having a voice, chose *exclusively* from their own ranks the ruling clique.

What wonder, then, that that clique made laws *for* the Rich and consequently *against* the Poor? What wonder that those laws have made many of their idle makers to receive each annually over forty thousand pounds, produced by the toil of *millions* of men and women, whom the

same laws forbid to earn more than forty pounds a year apiece, after toiling ten hours a day ?

But why did not the Poor exercise their undoubted right to elect their rulers ? Because they did not know how to use that right. So Smith solemnly swore to devote his body, and if necessary his soul also, to teaching the poor to overturn any Government set over them, which they did not elect.

With this end in view, he spent every shilling, not absolutely necessary for his daily bread, in books and getting taught. He greedily read anything and everything he could lay hands on, even the writings of the old French *encyclopédistes*.

Seized with an irresistible longing to know the land, the language, and the laws of that mighty nation, which, at the taunting of a penniless exile, had trampled under foot the most intolerable tyranny of modern times—he started for Paris.

He had spent four years of doubt and trial in London, and left it no longer doubting but convinced. He believed in God ; he believed in himself ; he believed in nobody else. He believed that his duty towards his neighbour was to do unto that neighbour more—of a like deed, whether good or evil—than that neighbour had done unto him. He had, therefore, a profound contempt for all social conventionalities.

In Paris, he lodged in a *mansarde* in the narrow rue des Poitevins of the Quartier Latin. Here for two years he studied and starved, gaining his bread and *bouillon*, and saving a few francs for travel by giving English

lessons to ambitious '*Calicots*' and *Grisettes*, about to 'better themselves' by emigrating to London or New York. Although in one of the cheapest streets on the south side of the Seine, Smith liked his quarters well enough, for they were quiet and never disturbed by outside traffic. It's true they were a very long way upstairs to crawl to, when he came in tired and aching with hunger, but on the other hand they were quite close to the free libraries, lectures, and museums. His den was within a stone's-throw of the splendid Boulevard St. Germain, and when dazed with reading, he often sallied out and sat on one of the green benches under the chestnuts, and thoughtfully watched the magnificent carriages carrying gilded youths and gorgeously-got-up dolls to and from the Champs-Élysées.

Leaving Paris he roved about for eight months as cheaply as possible, sharply noting everything he came across and all the information he could get. In this way he visited the south of France, the north of Spain and Italy, Switzerland, western Germany, Belgium and Holland, and thence to Dublin. Then he wandered and wondered through the poorest Irish counties, just ripening then for the outbreak of the last land troubles, and finally tramped into Queenstown. From there he sailed as a steerage passenger, by the first boat that called, for New York, where he landed with six sovereigns sewn up in his only waistcoat. The voyage out was rather rough, but after the first three days, he spent most of his time sitting alone on the anchor cable, watching the limitless sea heave and roll around him. He said it brought the

Creator's might more home to him than even the sun, or statistics about the stars ; but then he had never been on the open ocean before.

He obtained work much sooner than he had dared to hope ; for the first time in his lonely life he became prosperous ; yet, contrary to what you would expect, his old opinions became stronger with his increased prosperity. His detestation of the system of privileged classes and professions, his disgust at the administration of the English laws, his contempt for middle-class conventionalities, and his pity for the poor sank deeper into his mind as he got to know American freedom, faulty though he knew that liberty to be.

He did not tell me, and I had no right to ask, how he afterwards came to be the organiser in a Western city, of a vast and powerful Revolutionary league. But he did tell me that he was unmarried, and earned quite as much money as he deserved by his pen. Although frequently pressed by the league to receive payment for his work for it, he firmly declined a single cent, so that he might always be able to say and prove that he was not animated by any dishonest or mercenary motive. He assured me (and I afterwards independently found his statement to be true) that his society had very large funds at its disposal ; many wealthy Americans and naturalised Irish, English, and Germans having contributed privately or anonymously to its support.

When talking of the present state of English society, before entering upon sterner matters, Smith repeatedly denounced what he

was pleased to call 'the hypocrisy, selfishness, and immorality of the middle classes.' For an instance: 'Every middle-class girl,' he said, 'supposes when she's seventeen that she's going to marry somebody *better* than her father. Her mother generally aids and abets her. To gain and to fill the better position she is so sure of, she thinks it vulgar to do any *work*, or even to know how to do any. So she devotes her time to looking-glasses and novels. So helpless is she, that she dare not even walk to her dress-maker's without somebody to protect her from 'insult,' for perhaps 'a strange man' might be so stupid as to ask her the nearest way to the next street or the next village. She is eminently proper and well-behaved, and any love in her heart has soon to quit and give place to calculating pride. So no man under thirty, unless endowed by a father, is bold enough to ask her to marry him, for, before that age at least, he cannot have saved enough to gild her drawing-room and helpless body. What is the consequence? Those exacting young women drive those despairing young men into the streets, where their demand must be satisfied by a sufficient supply of the 'helpless, hopeless, homeless,' bribed into sin out of the 'lower-class' families, and sold openly in the vilest market that ever cursed a civilised city.'

'At twenty-five, that middle-class girl would marry any man with a fourth of her father's income, no matter how big a blackguard he may be, provided he is 'a gentleman, and his profession not beneath her father's.' At thirty-two, she would run away with anybody without a

penny, if he could be construed as belonging to her class at all. But then it is the old labourer's reason over again: 'When they would ha' they, then they wouldn't ha' they, and now they won't ha' they, they would ha' they.' At forty, her father dies, and she is left with all her invaluable gentility and fifteen hundred pounds. I don't know a more miserable and contemptible object on this earth, than a poor and proud and helpless middle-class spinster.'

'Here in the States, hardworking young men can and do marry at twenty-one. The shrewd young woman of twenty, who has literally been her mother's 'help' since she left school; who can buy a beefsteak in the market by herself, bring it home, and cook it and eat it straightforwardly; who can do the old Scotch and Irish ballads *con amore*, and quote Job and Shakspere in pure English—I say, if that young woman loves a 'dry-goods drummer' and calculates that she will be as happy with him as with a Philadelphia preacher, she marries him and cooks the wedding breakfast herself, and makes her own clothes herself, and afterwards *keeps* herself by saving a 'hired help' till they can afford one. And when she stands beside the English spinster some day before the Great Judge, and He asks what each has done with the talent entrusted to her, it isn't hard to guess which will be rewarded.'

Like all revolutionists, Smith was a destructive, rather than a constructive, 'reformer.' I was startled, although deeply interested, by his extraordinary arguments. I feel sure that he wished to proselytise me, yet he never once

expressed such a wish, perhaps, because he gathered that I should 'refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.'

I should say, at the outset, that he fiercely condemned as enemies to his cause, all encouragers of secret dynamite outrages and 'senseless assassinations,' but chiefly on the ground that they disturb the well-fed sleep, in which he and his fellow-conspirators are anxious that the British governing classes should be wrapped, until the universal awakening by a more or less distant dawn. The policy of these traitors, therefore, is to watch, without giving any sign of their existence, until haply Great Britain be in dire distress. Then they will willingly risk all they have in this world and the next, not only their lives, but their souls also, in trying to bring about the greater good of a greater number, than all our wise men, after a thousand years of effort, have yet succeeded in effecting. So you see that these well-wishers of our beloved country do not suffer from an excessive modesty in estimating their abilities.

But how is the indispensable 'dire distress' coming to pass?—I asked of Smith. Listen;—he answered—the Education Act of 1870 was the death-warrant of the British monarchy and aristocracy. The shepherds of Arcadia are no longer as silly as their sheep; they are beginning to think; they are beginning to be *men*. The town trade-unionist has already found the value of combining with his brother-workmen; he can read and speak now, too; soon he will read and speak ideas which his father dared not even think. The other day, your old women

were frightened out of their few wits by a very mild earthquake in two Scotch counties, within a few hundred miles of their own firesides. Hark ! and you will hear already ominous murmurs, which forebode an infinitely more awful earthquake—an earthquake which will shake every county in the kingdom to its lowest hovel. And the realm shall be rent in twain by a yawning chasm, into which an irresistible tidal wave, levelling all the old bounds and limits, will sweep Crowns and Coronets and Mitres, Land-spoilers and their Land-laws, Idlers and gilded Drones and their ribbons and their stars, their palaces, their precedence, and their privilege, and all their paraphernalia, and they shall be swallowed up for ever.

But your growling Briton will not bite till he is hungry. He will bear any wrong, and obey any law, so long as he has bread to eat. Take that away, and he becomes a wild beast. 'Tis true still that 'the way to an Englishman's heart is down his throat.' A man who has bred up his big bull-dog from a puppy, can safely play with the ugly and gentle brute : let him but snatch the barest bone, however, from the teeth of his hungry pet, and those teeth will be instantly fastened in his hand. The Briton, as he proudly boasts, is a veritable bull-dog.

Now a famine might occur in six weeks,—added Smith. Suppose those jealous and fickle French fellows fall foul of England over some colonial, commercial, or Suez Canal question, and in a moment of Parisian frenzy are driven to declare war against us. They would tear up the old treaty on contraband, in scorn, when

dealing with an island which they meant to starve, and they would confiscate all corn-ships that they captured. So they need only use their splendid navy in harassing our mercantile marine, and bread would double its price in London in three weeks. Three weeks later, it would be dearer still, and many thousand men thrown out of work would steal it for their starving children. 'Now force is no remedy' for a famine.

But we have passed through similar crises before, without any very serious trouble,—said I, interrupting. Never; the circumstances have never been the same before,—he replied, quickly. When Napoleon caused the last scarcity in our country—eighty years ago—there were only *nine million* people in England to be fed; now there are *twenty-seven million*—just three times as many mouths; yet there is *not one acre more land* available for growing bread. Indeed, there is less land under wheat now than then, for much of the present permanent pasture was ploughed up and planted with cereals. Of course twenty per cent. more food *could* be produced for a time in England on an emergency, by growing grain on the same land year after year without a fallow; but the first increase would take at least six months, and possibly sixteen months, to plant and harvest, and in our day empires are sometimes crushed in six weeks, and 'while the grass grows, the steed starves.' Besides, in the old war-time, England's mightiest five hundred thousand men were fighting or at sea abroad; now, all her strongest sons, except two hundred and fifteen thousand, are at home, and if famishing would *not*

fight for the Queen. Then, the *proletarii* could neither read nor write; they were too ignorant, too scattered, to combine; revolutionary meetings, leagues, and speeches of the modern kind were illegal, and riots were suppressed with ruthless severity, such as no Government would dare to adopt nowadays—until too late. Moreover, Ireland was much easier kept quiet then than now.

Or suppose—he continued, going back to his original proposition,—some American politicians, to curry favour with their noisiest supporters, refuse to ‘extradite’ some political murderers, or assist the Canadian North-West to secede to them, or allow filibustering expeditions of Irishmen to be prepared in the ‘States’ ports, or wrangle over the Canadian fisheries,—or suppose the too-zealous captain of a British gunboat caught a cargo of armed American-Irish conspirators, and strung up one or two to his yardarm, or if the Irish Lord-Lieutenant hanged a couple of really guilty American citizens for bloody treason on the evidence of *paid* informers—why, in any one of these quite possible ‘questions,’ the ‘relations between the English Cabinet and the authorities at Washington’ might be so strained as to snap at any moment.

In that event, the Americans could not damage us with their navy, for the simple reason that they haven’t got one—yet, but they would make a raid on Canada, which most Canadians would resent, yet be unable to repel. The French subjects of the queen would then appeal to her for help, which probably, just then, she

would not, or could not, give sufficiently. Then, like prodigal sons, they would cry aloud to their deserted mother, and France would 'conditionally' help them.

The five million Irishmen in Ireland, aided and abetted by their *ten* million Irish brothers in America, would rebel immediately, and one trembles to think of the hideous butchery that would take place in their unhappy Island. Bread would soon cost a shilling a loaf. Cotton-mills and many other factories would be closed. Several of our largest cities would be out of work and would soon get hungry. All our regular soldiers would be fighting for their lives in India against millions of mutineers, for the jackals would turn upon their leader and would tear him, so soon as they saw that the Northern Eagle long hovering above had at last swooped down and picked out the eyes of the sleeping lion. And the mighty bird, scaring away the wounded jackals, would batten on the carcase of the blind old brute, while his snarling slayers slew each other for the morrow's carrion. But Russia would not prey on India for long, for her own revolutionists would soon follow our example, and free their country from foreign wars and embarrassing colonies.

But the Militia and Volunteers would keep the country quiet at home—I ventured to remark. Rubbish! replied Smith hastily. The Militia would fraternise naturally with their brother-peasants, like the French militia did. As to the Volunteers—the shop-boys who became weak soldiers and water solely because

their sweethearts liked them better in a livery—they would never shoot down their fellow-citizens crying for bread in the streets. The Volunteer is fifty weeks an obsequious civilian, to one week a well-fed toy-soldier. Only a fiftieth part of him is therefore trained to unquestioning obedience to a military captain. Stop his sweetheart's and his own, his father's, mother's, sister's, and brother's bread, and then let a fearless demagogue tell him that a score of wealthy men in London, living in luxury and calling themselves a Government, have starved him and his by their stupidity, and that Volunteer will shoulder his rifle, which Government has opportunely given him, and will march under that demagogue against that Government.

Thousands of discontented men have, at one time or another, joined the Volunteers, to become useful deserters to the 'enemy,' their brothers, at the outbreak of civil war. Have you forgotten that the notorious 'Number One'—the assassin who planned the murder of Cavendish and Burke—was that same year a Volunteer in the Queen's select body-guard, within bayonet-thrust of her body, at the opening of the London Law Courts? Pshaw!—added Smith contemptuously—I tell you that the Volunteers will be some of our most valuable allies; nothing creates a panic in an army like wholesale desertions to the other side.

As to skilled military leaders, they have already been provided for. We do not find that officers are hard to buy, who, for eleven shillings and sevenpence a day, are willing to risk their

expensively-brought-up lives as often as required for a Government which disgusts them by every kind of vexation, and which they loathe accordingly.

But what about the navy and merchant ships—wouldn't they be against you? Wouldn't they bring over loyal colonists and allies to assist the Queen?—I asked timidly, for I saw that my friend was annoyed at my doubting him. Let them dare to bring such traitors!—he replied, passionately, before I could complete my question. That would lead to a massacre without mercy of every man that did not instantly join our ranks. The ships could land such men, of course, by driving us out of any port; but it would require many thousand men, beyond the reach of the ships' guns, to drive back tens of thousands of desperate rebels, who could expect no mercy if defeated. It is possible, too, that some of the ironclads might have been burning coal with dynamite lumps inside, before the outbreak of the rebellion,—and the villain chuckled with a malignant glee. And besides, some of the sailors and a pilot or two might not be so loyal as well-fed servants of the queen should be. The galley-slaves that rule the waves for Britannia, once deserted her when her very life depended on their allegiance, and they *might* desert her again. Look in any history of England, and you will find that the Government Securities were sold at the lowest price ever quoted, in the week when a mutinous *British fleet of Twenty-five sail blockaded London* at the mouth of the Thames, and threatened to take

their ships into a French port and *serve under a Revolutionary Admiral against Nelson!*

'Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason?
Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason.'

said the quaint old Harrington, three hundred years ago. If our rebellion prospered, neither our consciences nor anybody else would accuse us of treason; but it is '*just possible*' that it might not succeed. What would happen then?—I asked. Why nobody could control some of the desperate fiends that would be found in our ranks. As soon as they saw that we were beaten, the more reckless would burn London and some other cities, while the more malicious would sack and burn the country palaces of the great landowners. London need not fear dynamite; that explosive might ~~shatter~~ damage a great city, but it could not seriously damage a great city, unless used in enormous quantities; but have you ever thought how easily London could be burned? Fifty subtle men could, without detection and with or without the aid of the gas-mains, commit appalling havoc in the huge city in one night. (I refrain, for obvious reasons, from detailing the diabolical means for burning blocks of buildings, which Smith explained to me; I will merely say that in the hands of experts they would be terribly effective.)

A strange fascination forced me to question the calculating scoundrel further, and so I asked what he and his would do in the highly-improbable event of their getting the country into their hands. Well, we should have very little land to govern besides that included in our own

Island, for we should have no colonies. India would belong to Russia and to some Indian adventurers, for the short time they could hold it, and we would wish them joy of it. America would get outside of Canada and the West Indies, and I may add that she would have wrapped herself round them years ago, if they had been worth having. But, for its size, Canada is the poorest country in the world. It is the straggling, frost-bitten, wayside scrub of North America, and will be annexed to the States merely to prevent those priest-ridden, French Canucks from setting up a title to the High Road 'waste,' on which they have camped on sufferance. Just as an English Landowner steals the unenclosed heath and adds it to his estate, to prevent the squatting commoners and gypsies from becoming independent and a permanent nuisance near his game preserves. The West Indies are broken-down sugar merchants, and of no good to any white people; but perhaps the States, who know so well how to turn bankrupts to account, may be able to make some dollars out of them.

The Transvaal will 'trek' down to Cape Colony and try to 'eat it up,' and there will then be a triangular duel of British, Boers, and Blacks. The Whites will be so weakened by loss of blood, that they will call in Germany (if she has not fallen apart into republics on the death of Bismarck) to protect them; and the last state of that land will be worse than the first.

Australasia would play the United States of a hundred years ago, but without the diversion of a war of independence; and we should sell

the other colonies to the highest bidders. But I think we would keep Gibraltar, as a pledge to insure the neutrality of the Suez Canal, for we shall be the traders of the world.

Then you don't believe in colonies—I said. No. A distant colony is as bad an investment to a nation, as a very fine, old, out-of-the-way manor-house in another county, is to a poor squire. The annual repairs, and property-tax, and fire insurance, and anxiety as to whether the present grumbling tenant will take it on again—cost the squire more than he gets from the irregularly-paid rent and the glory of having a picturesque place.

In the very unlikely event, however, of a colony with rich resources begging us to retain it, we should keep it, if it undertook to pay all the expenses of government, besides a sufficient annual premium for our insuring it against foreign attack and annexation.

Of what good have the Colonies been to the British *people*? They have merely made the Rich, richer, and consequently the Poor, relatively poorer. 'But they have made the name of England the most glorious in history'—I boasted in my English pride. Glory be damned—he said, snappishly. Go and ask the *millions* of ragged, half-fed wretches in the town slums, villages, and workhouses of Great Britain—how much *they* have got out of the 'brightest jewel in the British crown' and the other colonial diamonds, which add so much glory to the sunny face of our smiling sovereign.

Just think a minute of the blood and treasure which India alone has cost us and our

victims, during the last hundred and thirty years, from the tortures of the black hole of Calcutta up to the present Egyptian tragedies. Take only the odd thirty years of this period, and reckon up the horrors of the Crimean war, the massacres by both Whites and Blacks in the Indian mutiny, the Afghan butcheries, and the carnage in Egypt. The record is as sickening as it is sinful. What right have we to foist the civilisation, which has failed with our own thirty millions, upon three hundred millions at the other side of the globe? Are the workers of the United Kingdom, with her colonies *eighty* times larger than herself, happier than the workers of Belgium, without a colony at all?

'But you have not said what you should do with Ireland'—I remarked. There's your native English impudence again! '*do with Ireland*' indeed! just as if the Irish had no right to be consulted as to what was to be *done with* them. Why, we should agree with her that she could do as she liked, but that neither Island could conclude a close alliance with any other nation without the consent of the sister Island. She would probably decide at the outset to be independent, but I believe that after a few years she would be glad to become a self-governing 'state' federate to the Commonwealth. You are surprised at my using the word 'Commonwealth'; I suppose you expected me to say 'Republic'? No, we should stick to the good old names of the Great Revolution. 'Commonwealth' was coined long before political economy ranted of 'the greatest good of the greatest number,' but what single word

can better express a government for the real good of everybody? Besides, 'Republic' is a foreign word 'not understood of the people.' Neither should we call the temporary Representative of the Commonwealth—a 'President,' he would be 'Protector'—thus reminding us of Oliver—the strongest Englishman that ever lived.

Having the finest geographical position and port conveniences in the world for trading, we should continue to be the carriers and traders of the world, even if we lost our manufacturing supremacy, which we could hardly lose, so long as we remained the only free-trade nation.

Although we should cease to be aggressive, and should no longer meddle with foreign politics which did not concern us, we should certainly not allow ourselves to be 'sat upon' or bullied by any other nation or probable combination of nations. I no more believe in a state existing on sufferance, than I believe in a trade bolstered up by bounties. We would be no Switzerland or Denmark. The Commonwealth would contain more wealth in its one island, than any other like space of land on the face of the earth ever yet possessed, and we should know how to keep it, and to keep off pirates. For these reasons, we should maintain a thoroughly efficient and sufficient navy and army.

Talking of 'wealth,' we should write off the National Debt as a 'bad debt.' It was mainly a tax put upon posterity by the lunatic George the Third and his iniquitous courtiers for their own personal aggrandisement. We are no more bound to pay that tax, than an industrious

nephew is bound to pay the gambling debts of a bankrupt uncle, who died before he was born. The repudiation of the National Debt would act as an effectual warning to future bill-discounters, never to lend money again to spendthrift swash-bucklers on the security of 'post-obits.' Moreover the existence of the National Debt is otherwise immoral, for it still induces modern governments to obtain money under false pretences. How many old men and women are there who understand, when they invest their savings in Government 'funds,' that the Government never receives a penny of their money? How many of them know that the eight hundred million pounds, which the Government assures them constitute their 'funds,' do not exist at all? If a retired greengrocer were shown—when he pays a hundred and two pounds for 'a hundred pounds' worth of Government stock'—that he pays his hundred and two golden sovereigns down to a cute gambler for a bad debt of a hundred pounds, which that gambler knows, perfectly well, will never be paid, I guess that grocer would go for that gambler. Yet that is a 'confidence trick' which is played by sharps upon flats, thousands of times every day, without the least suspicion on the flats' part that they are being humbugged.

Having no interest on debt and no royal family to provide for, we should save one-third of our present national expenditure. The navy and army would cost less than half what they cost at present. The direct taxes would mostly be raised by a cumulative income-tax on all personal revenues above a hundred pounds a year.

I am not such a fool as to suggest a cut-and-dried Constitution. You can no more create a constitution through which a mule could not make a hole, than you can create a quickset hedge strong enough to keep him in his paddock. When the ground is cleared of all the old rubbish, and is clean and ready for planting, you can merely sow the 'haws,' water them, and protect them with temporary palings which will soon rot and require renewal. You will at once have to keep down the mice and birds which will try to prey on the seeds. When the shoots have come up, you must frequently weed between them, and afterwards there is the constant training of the stems, and the clipping of the twigs which won't grow in the direction you want them to. It will be years before you can get a mule-proof fence, and even then at the very spots which look neatest, you will find the real wood stems are weakest, and there an exceptionally rough-skinned and intelligent mule may force his way through. And you must not forget that it is only a neglected hedge 'which runs to seed' and becomes effete; to prevent this exhaustion, you must prune and manure wherever it seems thin and worn out.

The free-will of the majority in a community should govern that community, regardless of whether that government is right or wrong as measured by the standards of other communities. Whether that government is wrong or right, its natural consequences will surely and fairly come sooner or later upon the governors.

Personally, I should vote—continued Smith

—for the simplest possible form of supreme Government, by *one* really representative Congress of Five hundred fairly-paid delegates, elected by adult suffrage in five hundred separate districts of approximately equal population. These delegates might choose the Governing Council of eleven, and also the voteless Protector. The Congress might be elected for three years, but dissolved at any other moment; that the majority decided. The Government and also the Protector should be changeable by the majority at will. A President who has a lease of power for a definite term of years, is a great danger to a nation, as America may find some day, and as France found in McMahon. Of course an executive commission during a possible 'interregnum' of Protectors would have to be, and could easily be, provided. The Protector should have no power whatever over the naval and military forces; he should be the servant, rather than the superior, of the Council. As a concession to the advocates of absolute democracy, who argue that a delegate might wilfully cease to remain the representative of his electors, I think that if a majority of the electors of a division signed a requisition requiring their delegate to resign, the Protector should be compelled to declare that division 'unrepresented,' and order it to hold another election forthwith. I would leave all merely local matters to be settled by local parliaments.

We should defray the cost of elections out of the public purse, and bribery would be punished by imprisonment with hard labour and forfeiture of right to vote. Though every man

and woman above twenty-one would have one vote each and one only—I must admit that I am doubtful as to the wisdom of woman suffrage, until women are educated as they ought to be. And as Might is the last argument of Right, I cannot forget that a possible majority of women could not enforce their will against a minority of men. But as an average woman has been generally considered an excellent empress of the ‘greatest empire in the world’ for fifty years past—I must concede that an average woman is capable of exercising wisely an infinitesimal share in the choice of a ‘member of parliament.’

I need hardly say that all hereditary titles would be abolished, together with ‘precedence,’ professional and otherwise. As in America to-day, a greengrocer should be on perfect equality with a major-general. To my mind the baker who added to the national wealth, by producing a loaf, should certainly rank in the eyes of citizens on an equality with the bishop who ate it. Neither should we allow old titles of rank to unofficially circulate as in France now, or, indeed, any ‘title’ not granted by Congress. Any person using such forbidden privileges, would be punished as guilty of ‘obtaining goods under false pretences.’ Probably the most effectual way of punishing such an offence, would be by officially changing the surname of the offender! ‘Mr. Howard, proved guilty of using the forbidden prefix ‘Honourable,’ in seeking to obtain a young woman in marriage, to be henceforward called Mr. Snodgrass’—for instance.

The chief wealth of the country would be 'real property': Land, Houses, Railways, Mines, Manufactories, Docks, &c. I will not pretend to suggest any scheme for dealing with these; that could be left to the first Congresses to decide. Probably the Government would consider itself the Trustee for the nation of a proportional part at least of all such assets, asserting its nominal ownership simply by levying an appreciable tax or rent-charge on them.

It would certainly be advisable to divide the great landed estates into small lots, to be separately distributed amongst many resident citizens, and to remove the materials of all such mansion-houses as would not be required for public institutions. These precautions would put a stop to the plots, which proved so troublesome to the French nation after the revolution, of *émigrés* landowners seeking to 'have their own again.'

'The Church' would of course be dis-established without compensation. 'Vested rights' should rather compensate for past enjoyment, than be compensated for their abolition, for the 'vested rights' of one man are generally the 'vested wrongs' of another.

I am no advocate like the French reformers were, for the payment by the State of any kind of minister belonging to any kind of religious sect—Christian or otherwise. These people should never be 'civil servants.' If servants at all, they should be the servants of some power, tangible or intangible, which should have sufficient influence with the con-

sciences of his worshippers to induce them to feed as well as respect his servants. Those who want parsons should pay for them. The law of supply and demand would soon regulate the market of these gentry.

The Commonwealth would take the matter of Education under its especial care as a national duty. There would be free, unsectarian schools for everybody. If the confiscated property of the Church were not enough to provide funds for a thoroughly efficient system of teaching—the Government would ungrudgingly vote any further supplies necessary. We should do our best to have in time but one ‘vulgar tongue’ for all citizens, from the Peasant to the Protector. At present, as you are aware, there are at least three different languages in use by Englishmen, although born within a few miles of each other; for you cannot say that the Berkshire labourer, the Marquess of Salisbury, and Harry of Oxford Street speak the same tongue. In America, thanks to the Education laws, you never hear an h’less man, unless perhaps an English emigrant. The ‘bus-driver of Boston speaks identically the same language as honest Abe Lincoln—the greatest president of this century—spake, when he was yet alive.

I must not forget another extremely important matter—the administration of Justice. In England, as you know already, there is no justice for the Poor man. He must suffer the wrongs done him by the rich in silence, or he will be cast again for libel. ‘We should change all that.’ The law would be codified in the simplest possible manner. All Judges and all

advocates, in all the courts from the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth down to the smallest county courts, would be specially trained and well-paid civil servants. And any such officer of the law caught receiving the smallest fee or any other advantage from a suitor, would be instantly disgraced and publicly punished. We would have no more scandalous injustice administered in the name of the Government at 'Petty Sessions,' by petty tyrants qualified solely for the office which they make odious to every poor man, by their possessing more pheasants and fields than their neighbours. Whilst taking sufficient precautions to prevent unwarrantable litigation, we should as much as possible provide Free Justice for all.

We should adopt the principle of Free Trade in everything, except in human beings. And, mind you, *real* free-trade—not the inconsistent sham which we have at present. Why is the poor man forced to pay a heavy duty on his tea and tobacco when the rich man's turtle-soup is not taxed at all? The labourer's wife pays *sixpence for tax* out of every twenty-two pence she pays for a pound of tea. When she brews the wash-tub full of beer for the thirsty harvest work, she must pay away *half* the money value of the beer in taxes. When her husband has his Christmas noggin or two of gin, he pays *threepence for tax and a penny for gin*. Out of the threepence he pays at the village shop for his fortnightly ounce of baccy, he pays *one half-penny for tobacco*, and *five halfpence for taxes*. And yet people say the poor don't pay any taxes!

To suppose that a tax on beer will prevent drunkenness, is to suppose that everybody is drunk in countries where there is no such tax. Yet the men of South Europe, who can buy wine at one-fifth its price in England, are never summoned for being 'drunk and disorderly.' To take away a man's misery, is the only means to stop his 'drowning' it. To make that drowning a luxury, is to induce him to buy it as soon as he can save up enough money. It is a policy worthy of Laurie, M.P., who, to prevent suicide, brought in a bill to punish with 'hard labour' all those guilty of it.

On the open question of divorce, personally I should vote for being strict about the marriage contract. Looseness in that matter was one of the mortal maladies of Old Rome, and it may some day shake New America. Marriage once legally contracted in the presence of the official registrars should be inviolable. Divorce should only be granted after the most searching inquiry and proof that there was no collusion or conspiracy.

You see I am no Communist or Socialist—Smith continued; it is utter nonsense to suppose that Englishmen will do without private property.

Neither am I a believer in 'Equality.' God did *not* 'create all men equal'—in ability. But neither did He intend one man to be a Duke of Westminster without working, and his neighbour to be a gruel-fed workhouse pauper, after sixty years of toil. Even a near approach to Equality is quite impracticable, but by indirect means we might make men more equal than they

are now. We should let any man get as rich as he liked by the honest use of his own brains ; but when he alienated his wealth, either by appreciable gifts during his life or by will after his death, we should put a heavy cumulative tax on the Receiver, for the privilege of having wealth secured to him, which he never earned. Of course secret transfers or other conspiracies for defrauding the Government of these just taxes, would be severely punished by confiscation and imprisonment.

I began to get as tired as you are of these wild conceits, and I was, besides, parched by the burnt heat of the stove, whose great, red, talc eye glared at me over the tops of my boots until my eyes ached ; so I didn't wait to hear the rest, but got down off the table and stretched myself, and gaped, and thanked the twitterer for his twit.

Striking a light as I turned to go, I noticed a dusty flag displayed over the doorway. It was a rising Sun on a black ground. There was nothing artistic in the simple symbol in two stern colours—grim red and grave black—and yet, somehow, I was impressed by its simplicity and significance.

'That's the 'Black and Bloody Rag' under which we shall win or die'—said Smith after a pause ; 'if we win, it will be our national flag.'

I have given you the 'Rustic Revolutionist's' ideas, exactly as he gave them to me, with brutal frankness, in all their sin, in all their sadness, in all their madness, in all their inconsistency. Such, he assured me, are the

dreams of many thousands of our silent fellow-subjects during the long, long darkness, which they are sure will some day be dispelled by a glorious dawn.

I cannot yet forget their ominous Ensign ; for it is the sign which heralded the primeval Revolution of Chaos into Cosmos—when the seething black Abyss felt the Creator's fiat go forth : ' LET THERE BE LIGHT.'





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